

Averroes'
Middle Commentary
on Aristotle's
Poetics

Averroes [Ibn Rushd]

Translation, introduction, and notes by
Charles E. Butterworth



ST. AUGUSTINE'S PRESS
South Bend, Indiana
2000

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Manufactured in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Averroës, 1126–1198.

[Talkhis Kitab al-shi'r. English]

Averroes' Middle commentary on Aristotle's
poetics / Averroes (Ibn Rushd) ; translation,
introduction, and notes by Charles E. Butterworth
p. cm.

Originally published: Princeton University Press,
1986. With new pref.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-890318-03-5 (cloth : alk. paper)

1. Aristotle, Poetics. 2. Poetics—Early works to
1800. 3. Poetry—Early works to 1800. I. Butterworth,
Charles E. II. Title.

PN1040.A513 1999b

808.2—dc21

99-047256

∞ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

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THE TEXT

CHAPTER ONE

1. The purpose of this discussion is to comment¹ upon those universal rules in Aristotle's *Poetics* that are common to all or most nations, for much of its contents are either rules particularly characteristic of their² poems and their customs therein or are not found in the speech of the Arabs but are found in other languages.

2. He said: we intend now to speak about the art of poetry and the kinds of poems. Whoever wants the rules presented about it to be well ordered must first state the function of each kind of poem, what things poetic statements are constituted of, how many they are, what their constituent parts are like, and how many sorts of purposes poetic statements have.³ And in speaking about all this, he should proceed from the things that are naturally first for us with respect to this subject. 1447^a8-13

3. He said: every poem and poetic statement is either satire or eulogy.⁴ This becomes evident from an 1447^a13-18

¹ Literally, "to provide a middle commentary" (*talkhīṣ*).

² That is, of the Greeks.

³ Literally, "how many sorts of purposes are intended by poetic statements" (*kam aṣnāf al-aghrād allatī yuqṣad bi-al-aqāwīl al-shi'riyyah*).

⁴ Or, in keeping with Aristotle's text, "comic or tragic." The Arabic terms used here by Averroes—*hijā'* and *madīḥ*—are the very ones used in the old Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* by Abū Bishr Mattā Ibn Yūnus al-Qunnā'ī to render Aristotle's *kōmōidia*

inductive examination of poems, especially their poems about voluntary matters—I mean, about the noble and the base. This is also the case with the arts similar to the art of poetry—namely, the strumming of string instruments, playing of wind instruments, and dancing—I mean, that they are naturally disposed toward these two purposes. Poetic statements are imitative. There are three sorts of imitation and comparison, two simple and a third composed of these two. One of the two simple sorts is comparing one thing with another and exemplifying one by means of the other; this occurs in each and every tongue by means of utterances particular to their speakers⁵—like “as if,”⁶ “I imagine,”⁷ and what is similar to these in the tongue of the Arabs, which they call particles of comparison. Or one thing that is alike may be taken in place of the other, which is called substitution in this art; this is like His statement, may He be exalted, “and his wives are their mothers”⁸ and like the poet’s statement:

he is the sea from whatever direction you come
to him.⁹

and *tragōidia*; see *Aristūtālīs Fann al-Shiʿr*, 85:14. Because of the way Averroes develops the notion of satire and eulogy in paragraph 8, below, it is best to translate the terms in this manner.

⁵ Literally, “to them” (*ʿindahum*).

⁶ The utterance is *ka-anna*; see W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, vol. 2, pp. 78-82.

⁷ The utterance is *ikhāl*, which is the first-person singular imperfect of the verb *khāl*, “to imagine,” “to think,” or “to suppose.” See Wright, *A Grammar*, vol. 2, pp. 48-49, and vol. 1, p. 60.

⁸ See the Quran 33:6; the point of the comparison is the closeness of the Prophet Muhammad to the faithful, as is indicated by the beginning of this verse: “The prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves.”

⁹ The hemistich is from Abū Tammām Ḥabīb Ibn Aws al-Ṭāʾī (192/807-231/846); see *Dīwān*, vol. 2, p. 203. In this line, which is part of an ode in praise of the Abbasid Caliph Abū Ishāq al-Muʿtaṣim (reigned 218/833-227/842), Abū Tammām likens al-Muʿtaṣim’s generosity to the boundlessness of the sea. The substitution continues in the second half of the verse:

For beneficence is his depth and liberality his coastline.

You ought to know that the kinds of utterances¹⁰ the people of our time call metaphor and metonymy fall within this division. Metaphor is like the poet's statement:

the horses of youth and its trappings have been removed,¹¹

and metonymy is like His statement, may He be exalted, "or if one of you comes from the hollow."¹² However, metonymy is more substitution with respect to the consequences of something, whereas metaphor is substitution with respect to its analogues—I mean, when the relation between one thing and another is the same as the relation between a third thing and a fourth, the name of the third may be substituted for the first and conversely. The number of things giving rise to substitutions has already been set down in the *Rhetoric*.¹³ In the second divi-

¹⁰ The prepositional phrase "of utterances" has been added for clarity.

¹¹ The half-verse is from Zuhair Ibn Abī Sulmā Rabī'ah Ibn Raḥaḥ al-Muzanī, a pre-Islamic poet who died in about 609; see *Dīwān*, p. 124. The horses and trappings stand for the activities and pastimes of youth, especially making war and love; when one becomes too old for such things, it is as though they had been taken away. This notion of age stilling the desires of youth appears clearly in the first half of the verse:

His heart awakened from its love for Salmā and renounced its false wandering.

¹² See the Quran 4:43 and 5:7. The context explains how the believer must cleanse himself for prayer if he has engaged in any one of a number of activities held to be impure. The word translated here as "hollow," *al-ghā'it*, referring to a hollow or depression in the ground where one might perform his bodily functions, is used in place of the activity itself. It is also possible to interpret this phrase as though it were written "if something from the hollow comes upon one of you" (*aw jā' shai' min al-ghā'it ilā aḥad minkum*), for *al-ghā'it* can also be used to denote human waste.

¹³ See Aristotle *Rhetoric* III.ii.7.1405^a3-15.1405^b33. It should be noted, however, that what Averroes terms "substitution" here is called "metaphor" by Aristotle. Averroes' substitution is thus a larger genus under which metaphor and metonymy fall.

sion,¹⁴ the comparison is inverted—like saying “the sun is as though it were such and such a woman” or “the clasp is such and such a woman,” not “such and such a woman is like the sun” nor “she is the clasp.”¹⁵ On the contrary, there is the statement of Dhū al-Rummah:

and sand like the thighs of young maidens.¹⁶

The third sort of poetic statements is a composite of these two.

1447^a18-27 4. He said: just as some people naturally imitate and make representations of each other by actions either by means of an art and disposition belonging to them or because of habits they have acquired—like some people make representations of others by colors, figures, and sounds—so, too, do they naturally make representations by statements. With respect to poetical statements, imitation and representation come about by means of three things: harmonious tune,¹⁷ rhythm, and compari-

¹⁴ That is, the second of the two simple sorts of imitations and comparisons mentioned above.

¹⁵ In Arabic, the word for sun, *shams*, is feminine, as in the first example. When the word *shams* is used to denote the clasp of a necklace, however, it is masculine, as in the second example. See Ibn al-Tustarī, *al-Mudhakkar wa al-Mu'annath*, p. 87. The context strongly suggests that the third and fourth examples are parallels of the first and second examples, respectively, and I have translated accordingly. The verb translated here as “inverted” is *yubdal*, that is, the third-person singular passive imperfect of the verb *abdal*; the term translated as “substitution,” *ibdāl*, is the verbal noun.

¹⁶ The half-verse is from Ghailān Ibn 'Uqbah (ca. 77/696-117/735), known as Dhū al-Rummah; see *Dīwān*, p. 318. The idea is that the sand is pure, fine, and soft, thus being difficult to walk through. The complete verse reads:

And sand like the thighs of young maidens I walked through,
while dark obscurity covered it.

¹⁷ The term is *al-nagħm al-muttafiqah* or *al-nagħam al-muttafiqah*. In the next sentence Averroes uses the term *al-nagħm* (or *al-nagħam*) without modifying it. In both instances the corresponding term in Aristotle's text is *harmonia* (“harmony”), which Abū Bishr Mattā first

son¹⁸ itself. Each of these may occur separately from the others—like tune in flute-playing; rhythm in dance; and representation in utterances, I mean, in imitative non-rhythmic statements. Or all three may be brought together—like what is found among us in the kind of poems called *muwashshahāt*¹⁹ and

translates as *nazm* ("order" or "arrangement") and then as *ta'lif* ("composition"); see *Aristūṭālīs Fann al-Shi'r*, 86:9-13. In the course of the subsequent discussion, Aristotle uses the term *harmonia* by itself twice again (*Poetics* 1448^b20 and 1449^a28), then links it with *melos* ("song," see 1449^b29), and ultimately switches to *melopoia* ("song-making," see 1449^b33 and 35, 1450^a10, and 1450^b16). He uses these terms to distinguish the musical element in poetry from the rhythmic or metrical element on the one hand and from the spoken element on the other. Abū Bishr Mattā uses *ta'lif* to translate *harmonia* the second and third time it occurs (see 92:2 and 94:12), then switches to *ṣawt wa-nāghmah* for *harmonia* with *melos* (see 96:21), and then renders *melopoia* by *'amal al-ṣawt wa naghmah* (97:4 and 97:5-6) as well as by *al-naghmah wa al-ṣawt* (97:16) and *ṣan'ah al-ṣawt* (100:2). Although Averroes uses the plural of *laḥn* ("melody," the plural being *alḥān*) to capture the sense of Aristotle's second use of *harmonia* (see below, para. 13) and *laḥn* itself for the third occurrence (see below, para. 17), he subsequently reserves *laḥn* for those instances in which Aristotle links *harmonia* and *melos* (as in para. 20, below) or employs the term *melopoia* (see below, paras. 21, 22, and 30). To minimize confusion, I have translated *naghm* as "tune" and *laḥn* as "melody" with one exception (see below, para. 21, note 11).

¹⁸ The term is *tashbih*, which was used in paragraph 3, above, in conjunction with *takhyil*, "imitation," both serving there to render the sense of Aristotle's *mimēsis*. Note, however, that in this sentence Averroes links "representation" (*muḥākāh*) with "imitation" and then replaces the term *tashbih* by *muḥākāh* and its derivatives in the rest of the paragraph. The term *takhyil*, which I consistently translate as "imitation," is used by Averroes in a generic sense and thus captures perfectly the idea of *mimēsis* in Aristotle. The terms *muḥākāh* and *tashbih*, which I consistently translate as "representation" and "comparison" respectively, are used by Averroes as though they were species of *takhyil* ("imitation" or *mimēsis*) to represent imitation in speech, in melody, or in meter. See also para. 24 with para. 22, below, for an example of how Averroes uses these terms interchangeably without confusing the issue.

¹⁹ The *muwashshah* (plural *muwashshahāt*) is a folk-song or a poem meant to be sung that invariably has love as its theme. It originated in Spain and consists of several stanzas or strophes broken into two

azjāl,²⁰ these being the ones the people of this peninsula have devised in this tongue. For it is in natural poems that the three things are brought together, and natural things are to be found only among natural nations. There is no melody in the poems of the Arabs.²¹ Indeed, they have either meter²² alone or both meter and representation. Since this is the case, the imitative arts or those that effect imitation are three: the art of melody, the art of meter, and the art of making representative statements. This latter is the logical art we shall investigate in this book.

1447^a27- 5. He said: frequently, statements called poems
1447^b18 have nothing poetic about them but meter, as with the measured²³ statements of Socrates and the statements

parts—one of complete lines and the other of hemistiches. The poem is also ordered so that a rhyme set out at the beginning runs through the whole poem, recurring at the end of each stanza as a kind of refrain; apart from the refrain, each stanza is ordered according to a different subordinate rhyme.

²⁰ The *zajal* (plural *azjāl*) is very similar to the *muwashshah* in structure and also originated in Spain. It was brought to prominence by the troubadour from Cordoba, Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik Ibn Quzmān (died 555/1160).

²¹ See above, note 17. The idea is that poems composed according to the canons of Arabic poetry are not sung to music, as distinct from the *muwashshah* and the *zajal* kinds of poems.

²² This is the same term *wazn* that was translated above as “rhythm” in keeping with Aristotle’s *ruthmos*, rendered by Abū Bishr Mattā as *lahn*; see *Aristūṭālīs Fann al-Shi‘r*, 89:9-13. Here, however, and in the rest of this paragraph, Averroes uses the term in its more usual sense of “meter” or “measure.” Subsequently, Aristotle explains that meter is obviously part of rhythm; see *Poetics* 1448^b21-22. In keeping with that explanation and with the usual sense of *wazn*, I translate it as “meter” unless otherwise noted.

²³ The term here and in the following paragraph is *mawzūn* from *wazn*; see preceding note. The statements of Socrates in the dialogues of Plato or Xenophon have no meter per se; Averroes may have been misled by Aristotle’s speaking about the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus immediately prior to his mention of Socrates. It is also possible that he was aware of the opinion that their mimes inspired Plato to write dialogues. Or Averroes may even have been misled by Aristotle’s subsequent comparison of Homer to Empedocles, a mid-fifth century B.C. thinker who presented his teaching in

of Empedocles about natural phenomena. These are unlike the poems of Homer, for both things are to be found in them.

6. He said: therefore only that which brings these 1447^b18-24
two things together should truly be called a poem. It is more appropriate to call the others statements than to call them poems. Likewise, it is more appropriate to call someone who makes measured statements about natural phenomena a dialectician²⁴ than to call him a poet. Nor are imitative statements made up of mixed meters poems. He relates that such things—I mean, mixed meters—were to be found among them, but they are not found among us.

7. It has become evident from this discussion how many sorts of representation there are and of which of the arts representation by statement must be composed in order for its functioning to be complete.

verse. Still, the main point here is that the statements of both Socrates and Empedocles are not considered to be completely poetic, not because they are didactic in purpose but because they do not have representation.

²⁴ The term here is *mutakallim*; it is usually used to designate one who engages in dialectics about theological questions.

CHAPTER TWO

1448^a1-11 8. He said: because those who make representations and comparisons seek¹ thereby to encourage the performance of some voluntary actions and discourage others, the things they seek¹ to represent must necessarily be either virtues or vices. That is to say, every action and every moral habit follow from one of these two—I mean, from virtue and vice. Since each of the voluntary actions whose representation is sought¹ is either a virtue or a vice, the virtues must necessarily be represented only by virtues and virtuous individuals and the vices only by vices and vicious individuals. Since every comparison and narrative representation² is concerned only with the noble and the base, it is clear that in every comparison and narrative representation only praise³ and blame⁴ are sought.⁵ In addition, those who make representations of the virtues—I mean, those who are naturally inclined to make representations of them—must necessarily be more virtuous and those who make representations of the vices naturally more deficient and more proximate to vice. Eulogy and satire—I mean, eulogizing the virtues and satirizing the vices—arise from these two sorts of people. This is why some poets excel at eulogy but not at satire, whereas with others it is the converse—I mean, they excel at satire but not at eulogy.

¹ This is the same verb (*qaṣad*) that was translated “intend” in paragraph 2, above.

² The word is *ḥikāyah* and is thus related to the word *muḥākāh*, “representation.”

³ Literally, “making noble” (*taḥsīn*).

⁴ Literally, “making base” (*taqbiḥ*).

⁵ See note 1, above.

Therefore, these two headings⁶—I mean, praise and blame—are necessarily found in every comparison and narrative representation. Indeed, these two headings are found only in the comparison and in the representation that occur by statement, not in the representation that occurs by meter nor in that which occurs by melody. There may be a third heading for the comparison that occurs by statement, namely, the comparison in which the only thing sought⁷ is congruity between the thing compared and what it is being compared with, not praise or blame. This kind of comparison is like matter ready to be transformed into either of⁸ the two extremes—I mean, that through some addition it may at one time be transformed into praise and at another time into blame, also through some addition.

9. He said: this was the way of Homer—I mean, that in his comparisons he used to achieve congruity as well as, through something added, praise or blame. Among the poets, some excel only in congruity, others in either praise or blame, and yet others—like Homer—combine both. He cited examples of each of these sorts from among the poets who were well known in their cities and regimes for employing each and every one of these three sorts of comparisons. 1448^a11-25

10. It is not difficult for you to find examples of that in the poems of the Arabs even though, as Abū Naṣr⁹ says, most of their poems are only about overwhelming desire and yearning. That is to say, the kind they call *nasīb*¹⁰ encourages depravity. Thus the young

⁶ Literally, “these two chapters” (*hādhān al-faṣlān*).

⁷ See note 1, above.

⁸ The words “either of” have been added for clarity.

⁹ That is, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (257/870-339/950). This statement is apparently taken from a work that has not survived, for I find nothing resembling it in either of the two treatises on poetics that have come down to us, that is, the *Kitāb al-Shi‘r* (or *Book of Poetry*) and the *Risālah fī Qawānīn Ṣinā‘at al-Shu‘arā’* (or *Treatise on the Rules of the Art of the Poets*).

¹⁰ The *nasīb* is the introductory part or prelude to the ode (*qaṣīd*-

ought to avoid it and should be educated in those poems of theirs that encourage valor and generosity. Now these are the only two virtues encouraged by the Arabs in their poems, even though they speak about them not in order to encourage them but only in order to boast. The sort of poem in which congruity alone is sought¹¹ frequently occurs in their poetry. For this reason, they describe inanimate bodies a great deal, as well as animals and plants.

11. For the most part, however, the Greeks did not recite any poems other than those that either were directed toward encouraging virtue or discouraging vice or that provided something of good manners or knowledge.

12. From this discussion it has become evident that there are three sorts of comparisons with three headings. And what these three headings and three sorts are has become evident. When poems are examined inductively, it seems certain that there is neither a fourth sort of comparison nor a fourth heading for them.

dah—see below, para. 33, note 3, and para. 49, note 2). It is devoted to recalling to mind the woman whom the poet has loved many years before and is traditionally the only place in the ode where women are the subject.

¹¹ See note 1, above.

CHAPTER THREE

13. He said: it seems that there are two causes naturally giving rise to poetry in people. The first cause is that comparison and representation naturally exist in man from the moment he first comes forth—I mean, that this activity is found in people even when they are infants. This is something that particularly distinguishes man from the rest of the animals. The cause with respect to this is that man, as distinct from the rest of the animals, is the one who takes pleasure in comparing and representing the things he has perceived by his senses. A sign that man naturally delights and rejoices in making comparisons is that we are pleased and delighted by representations of things that we are not pleased to perceive by our senses, especially when the representation is extremely detailed—as occurs with the paintings of many animals executed by skillful painters. Because of this, illustrations are used in instruction and in conversation to foster understanding. Indeed, due to the pleasure existing in illustrations as a result of the imitation in them, they are a tool that tends to produce understanding about the intended object. Through the pleasure the soul takes in them, it becomes more completely receptive to that object.¹ After all, instruction does not belong solely to the philosopher; people other than the philosopher also have a slight share in it. That is, instruction is found to pass naturally from one man to another insofar as there is a relation between the man who is instructing and the man who is being instructed.² Now

1448^b4-24

¹ Literally, “to it” (*lah*).

² The idea is that the two men are of different ranks. Instruction comes about insofar as the man who is instructing uses comparison or representation to indicate something to the man who is being instructed.

when there are illustrations that are comparisons of objects already perceived by the senses, it is evident that they are used for quickness of understanding and ready acceptance and that they produce understanding through the pleasure coming from the imitation in them. This, then, is the first cause that gives rise to poetry. The second cause is the pleasure man naturally takes in meter and melodies³ as well. Indeed, it is clear that melodies are such as to be suited to meter for those who naturally perceive meters and melodies. Thus the pleasure the soul naturally takes in representations, melodies, and meters is the reason for the poetic arts existing, especially among those having extraordinary natural dispositions for them.

1448^b24-27 14. Thus as a nation grows, the art of poetry arises by one person first bringing forth a slight part of it, then someone subsequently bringing forth another part, and so on until the poetic arts are perfected. Their sorts are also perfected insofar as each sort of people is prepared to take greater pleasure in each one of the sorts of poetry. For example, it is the naturally virtuous and honorable souls who first engender the art of eulogy—I mean, the eulogizing of fine actions—and it is the more contemptible souls who engender the art of satire—I mean, the satirizing of base actions. It may be necessary, however, that someone whose intention is to satirize evil people and deeds praise good people and virtuous actions in order to make the baseness of the evil deeds more obvious—I mean, when he mentions those and then mentions base actions in contrast to them.

1448^b28-1449^a19 15. These are the matters in this chapter that are common to all or most nations. All or most of the rest of what he mentions is particular to their poems and their customs with respect to them. That is, he mentions the sorts of poetic arts that were used among

³ See above, para. 4, note 17. In the corresponding passage, Aristotle uses the term *harmonia* rather than *melos* or *melopoia*.

them, how each one of them naturally arose, and which part of them came into being before which other part—especially with respect to the art of eulogy and the art of satire that were so well known among them. In addition, he mentions the first one who invented each one of those poetic arts that were customary among them, those who added to them, and those who later perfected them. In this section he greatly lauds Homer and makes it known that he is the one who provided the principles of these arts and that no one before him did anything worth considering as concerns the art of eulogy, the art of satire, or any of the other arts well known among them.

16. He said: the most defective and shortest poems are the early ones, because it is easier for natural temperaments to seize them first. The shortest ones are those consisting of fewer verses,⁴ and the most defective are those consisting of fewer tunes. 1449^a19-21

17. He said: a sign that these kinds are the first to occur to souls is that in disputes people sometimes improvise these kinds of hemistiches for their arguments when hard pressed. In my estimation, he means something like someone saying “nooo, nooo, nooo” thereby drawing out the sound and saying “thiis is noot like thiis” thereby drawing out the sound.⁵ Repetitions like these are measured hemistiches that admit of melody. Those that are longer and more complete appear only later, as is the case with the rest of the arts. 1449^a25-31

18. He said: in the art of satire, the intention is not to represent only everything that is evil and base but rather everything that is ridiculously evil—that is, 1449^a32-35

⁴ Literally, “syllables” (*muqāṭiʿ*). Note that the term *qīṭʿah* (plural: *qīṭaʿ* and *muqāṭṭaʿāt*) refers to a fragment of the ode, that is *qaṣīdah* (see below, para. 33, note 3), and to an occasional piece of poetry; see below, para. 75, and Wright, *A Grammar*, vol. 2, p. 351.

⁵ The words “no, no, no” are pronounced slowly and emphatically, each word having a long beat (---); and the words “this is not like this” are given an alternating long and short beat (----).

everything that is vicious and ugly⁶ but does not cause grief.

1449^a35-37 19. He said: a sign that what is ridiculous must combine these three characteristics is that these three conditions are found in the face of the ridiculous person⁷—I mean, the ugliness⁸ of the face, its misshapeness, and indifference to its ridiculousness. This is in contrast to the face of the angry man—I mean, that there is something ugly⁹ and anxious about it, this being the disposition of the soul of the angry man with respect to the thing he is angry about.

⁶ Given the context and the parallel with Aristotle's text, it seems appropriate to translate *qabīḥ* here as "ugly." It should, however, be noted that the Greek *aisxros* could also be translated as "base," that which is ugly being in some respect base.

⁷ Or, "the comic mask" (*wajh al-mustahzi*). Given the development of the rest of the paragraph, I have preferred to be literal.

⁸ Or "baseness" (*qabāḥah*); see note 6, above.

⁹ See note 6, above.

CHAPTER FOUR

20. He said: the art of eulogy is brought into being 1449^b9-29 when recourse is had to long poetic meters¹ rather than short ones. Therefore recent poets have rejected the short poetic meters¹ which used to be employed in this and other poetic arts. The meter² most characteristic of it is the simple, non-compounded one. However, it ought not to be stretched out to such a length as to create aversion. The definition that makes the substance³ of the art of eulogy understood is: it is a comparison and representation of a complete,⁴ virtuous voluntary deed—one that with respect to virtuous matters is universal in compass,⁵ not one that is particular in compass⁶ and pertains only to one or another virtuous matter. It is a representation that affects souls moderately by engendering compassion and fear in them. It does this by imitating the purity and immaculateness of the virtuous. Indeed, only the exterior attitudes that imply the virtues are represented, not the states themselves, for these cannot be imitated. This representation by statement becomes complete⁷ when melody and meter are joined to it. Other devices apart from meter and melody that

¹ The term is *a'ārīḍ* and is the plural of *'arūḍ*, which is usually used to refer to the last foot in the first hemistich of a poem.

² The term is *wazn*. In the corresponding passage, Aristotle uses the term *metron*. Note that the meter referred to as "simple" here might also be understood as the *basīṭ* meter (*al-basīṭ*); see Wright, *A Grammar*, vol. 2, pp. 363-364.

³ That is, its very being or essence; the term here is *jawhar*.

⁴ Literally, "perfect" (*kāmil*), but throughout this section Averroes uses the terms *kāmil* and *tāmm* ("complete") interchangeably.

⁵ Literally, "has a universal power" (*lah quwwah kullīyyah*).

⁶ Literally, "has a particular power" (*lah quwwah juz'īyyah*).

⁷ Literally, "becomes perfect" (*takmal*); see note 4, above.

make the statement a more complete⁸ representation are to be found among the rhapsodes—namely, illustrations and delivery⁹—as has been discussed in the *Rhetoric*.¹⁰

1449^b31- 21. In making poetic eulogy, the first part of the art
1450^a7 consists of enumerating the honorable matters that are to be imitated, then adorning those matters with the melody and meter appropriate for the object spoken about. The function of melody in poetry is to prepare the soul to accept the image of what one intends to imitate. It is as though melody provides the soul with the preparation through which it accepts the comparison and representation of the thing whose comparison is intended. Indeed, in each kind of poetry the melody appropriate in its tones¹¹ and make-up¹² for the particular kind of poetry provides the soul with this attitude. For just as we find a high tone appropriate for a different kind of statement than that for which deep tones are, so ought we to believe happens with respect to the composition of melodies. In general, narrators and storytellers complete¹³ the imitation found in poetical statements themselves be-

⁸ The term is *atamm*; see note 4, above.

⁹ The term is *al-akhdh bi al-wujūh* and means literally “the taking of faces” or “the taking of appearances,” but it is consistently used in the old Arabic translations of Aristotle’s treatises and in Averroes’ commentaries on them to render the Greek *hupokrisis* (“delivery” or “elocution”). It is clear that the Arabic *al-akhdh bi al-wujūh* preserves more of the nuance of *hupokrisis* than the English terms “delivery” and “elocution”; see below, para. 31, where Averroes links *nifāq* (“dissimulation”) with *al-akhdh bi al-wujūh*.

¹⁰ See Aristotle *Rhetoric* II.xx.1.1393^a22-8.1394^a8, III.i.3.1403^b21-22, III.xii.2.1413^b8-14, and III.xvi.9.1417^a34-36.

¹¹ The term is *naghamāt* (singular: *naghamah* or *naghmah*) and is related to *naghm*, see above, para. 4, note 17. In the next sentence Averroes uses these terms interchangeably, speaking first of “a high tone” (*al-naghm al-ḥāddah*) and then of “deep tones” (*al-naghamāt al-thiqāl*).

¹² The term is *ta’līf*, that is, the term used by Abū Bishr Mattā to translate Aristotle’s *harmonia*; see above, para. 4, note 17.

¹³ Literally, “perfect” (*tukmil*); see notes 4 and 7 above.

cause of these three—I mean, comparison, meter, and melody, these being the elements of representation¹⁴—by means of two attitudes. One is an attitude that indicates a moral habit and character,¹⁵ such as someone speaking in a rational manner or in an angry one. The second is an attitude that indicates belief,¹⁶ for the attitude of someone who speaks and is convinced of something is not the same as someone who speaks and is doubtful. Thus in their speech and in their bearing the storyteller and narrator concerned with eulogy ought to have a convinced attitude and not a doubtful one, a serious attitude and not a jocular one—like someone saying “what kind of people are they to have such ends and beliefs?” The story and tale the storyteller and narrator ought to relate so as to preserve these two dispositions is the myth¹⁷ made up of comparison and representation. By myth, I mean the combining of things whose representation is intended either according to the way they are in themselves—I mean, in existence—or according to the way they are usually rendered in poetry, even if that is false. This is why poetical statements are said to be myths. In general, then, storytellers and narrators are those who have an ability to represent characters and beliefs.

¹⁴ See above, para. 4. In keeping with that passage, “meter” (*wazn*) should be understood here as “rhythm.”

¹⁵ The text has *khulq wa 'ādah*. Usually *khulq* (plural: *akhlāq*) is used to render Aristotle's *ēthos*, and the plural is used to denote moral habits in the sense of ethics. In this work, however, Averroes follows the old Arabic translation that uses the term *'ādah* (plural: *'ādāt*) to render Aristotle's *ēthos*. English translators of Aristotle's *Poetics* usually translate *ēthos* as “character.”

¹⁶ The term is *i'tiqād* (plural: *i'tiqādāt*) and is used by Averroes instead of *ra'y* (plural: *ārā'*). The latter term is used only once in the old Arabic translation to render Aristotle's *dianoia* (see *Aristūṭālīs Fann al-Shi'r*, 97:9), *i'tiqād* being used thereafter; see 97:16, 98:2, and 99:10.

¹⁷ The term is *khurāfah* and is used in the old Arabic translation of the *Poetics* to render Aristotle's *muthos*; see *Aristūṭālīs Fann al-Shi'r*, 97:11, and above, Introduction, note 18.

1450^a7-14 22. He said: the parts of the art of eulogy must be six—mythic statements, characters, meter,¹⁸ beliefs, spectacle,¹⁹ and melody. A sign of this is that every poetical statement may be divided into something that is compared and that by means of which it is compared. There are three things by means of which something is compared: representation,²⁰ meter, and melody. There are also three things compared in eulogy: characters, beliefs, and spectacle—I mean, discovery of the correctness of a belief.²¹ Thus the parts of the art of eulogy are necessarily six.

1450^a15-22 23. Now characters and beliefs are the major parts of eulogy, for the art of eulogy is not an art that represents people themselves insofar as they are individual human beings perceptible to the senses. Instead it represents them with respect to their fine characters, noble actions, and blissful beliefs. Character²² includes actions and moral habit. This is why character was set down as one of the six parts. By mentioning it in the division, the mention of actions and moral habit can be dispensed with.

24. Spectacle is what explains the correctness of be-

¹⁸ Throughout this passage, Averroes uses the term *wazn* where the old Arabic translation uses *maqūlah*, its rendering of Aristotle's *lexis*. Averroes apparently chooses the term *wazn* instead of *maqūlah* because of it being defined as the "composition of meters," the old Arabic translation having *wa a'nī bi al-maqūlah tarkīb al-awzān nafsah* for Aristotle's *legō de lexin men autēn tēn tōn metrōn sunthesin*; see *Aristūṭālīs Fann al-Shi'r*, 97:5 with *Poetics* 1449^b34-35.

¹⁹ Averroes uses the same term here as the old Arabic translation, *nazar*, where Aristotle speaks of *opsis*. But as will become clear in the immediate sequel, and especially in paras. 24 and 31, he understands the term in its more usual sense of speculation or reflection.

²⁰ Note that here and in what follows, Averroes uses "representation" (*muḥākāh*) and "myth" (*khurāfah*) interchangeably.

²¹ See above, note 19; the term translated as "discovery" here is *istidlāl*. Although Averroes may be using the term in its more usual sense of "inference," the attention paid to "discovery" in the immediate sequel demands this rendering; see below, para. 25, and note 26.

²² The text has the plural (*al-ādāt*).

lief.²³ It is as though it were for them a type of argumentation for the correctness of the eulogized belief. None of this is found in the poems of the Arabs, though it is to be found in eulogistic scriptural²⁴ statements. They used to represent these three things—I mean, characters, beliefs, and discovery²⁵—by the three sorts of things used in making representations—I mean, the imitative statement, meter, and melody.

25. He said: insofar as it makes a representation, the mythic statement has two parts. That is, every representation is prepared either by starting with a representation of its contrary and then passing to its proper representation—and this was known among them as reversal—or the object itself is represented without the representation of the contrary taking place—and this is what they used to call discovery.²⁶ Of these parts it is the representative mythic statement that occupies the position of beginning point²⁷ and foundation.

1450^a33-35

26. The second part is character,²⁸ and representation is first used with respect to it—I mean, it is what is represented. Now the narrative representation²⁹ is the pillar and foundation in this art, because no pleasure is taken from the thing intended to be mentioned just being mentioned without being represented. Rather, it is only when it is represented that pleasure is taken in it and it is accepted. That is why human beings take

1450^a39-
1450^b4

²³ See above, note 19.

²⁴ The adjective modifying statements is *al-shar'īyyah*, so the phrase could also be rendered "eulogistic statements concerned with the Divine Law."

²⁵ See above, note 21.

²⁶ The term "reversal" is *idārah*, and the term "discovery" is *istidlāl*. Though Abū Bishr Mattā uses the term *dawarān* here to translate Aristotle's *peripeteia*, he then switches to *idārah* and uses it consistently; he always uses the term *istidlāl* to translate Aristotle's *anagnōrisis*. See *Aristūṭālīs Fann al-Shi'r*, 99:1 and 106:10ff. See also below, paras. 41-47, 51, and 54.

²⁷ Or "principle," the term being *mabda'*.

²⁸ The text has the plural (*al-ādāt*).

²⁹ See para. 8, note 2, above.

no pleasure in looking at the mere forms of existing things, but do take pleasure when they are represented and depicted in hues and colors. And that is why people use the art of ornamentation and of painting.

1450^b4-7 27. The third part of the art of eulogy—I mean, the one subsequent to the second—is belief. This is the ability to represent what exists or does not exist in such and such a way. This is like the explanation undertaken in rhetoric that something does or does not exist, except that rhetoric undertakes it by means of persuasive statement and poetry by means of representative statement. This representation is also found in scriptural statements.³⁰

1450^b7-12 28. He said: the earliest founders of regimes used to content themselves with establishing beliefs in the souls by means of poetical statements until later ones became aware of rhetorical methods. The difference between the poetical statement that urges³¹ belief and that which urges character is that the one that urges character urges that something be done or avoided, whereas the statement that urges belief only urges that something does or does not exist, not that it is to be pursued or avoided.

1450^b12-15 29. The fourth of these parts—I mean, the one subsequent to the third—is meter.³² In order to be fully to the point,³³ it must be related to the purpose, for many a meter is related to one purpose but not to another.

1450^b15-16 30. The fifth part in order is melody. Of these parts, it has the greatest influence on souls and is the most effective.

1450^b16-18 31. The sixth part is spectacle³⁴—I mean, giving ar-

³⁰ Or “statements of the Divine Law” (*al-aqāwīl al-sharʿiyyah*).

³¹ This is the same verb, *hathth*, that was translated as “encourage” in paras. 8, 10, and 11 above. In this sentence, however, the stronger sense of “urge” or “exhort” seems more appropriate.

³² See above, note 18.

³³ Or, more literally, “in order to be complete” (*wa min tamāmih*).

³⁴ See above, note 19.

gument for the correctness of a belief or the correctness of a deed, not by means of a persuasive statement for that is not appropriate for this art, but by means of a representative statement. Indeed, the art of poetry and especially the art of eulogy, is not based on proving and disputing. That is why eulogy does not use the art of dissimulation and delivery the way rhetoric does.

32. He said: the scientific art that makes known what poems are made of and how they are made is more completely authoritative than making poems. Indeed, any art that is aware of the way the arts subordinate to it function is more authoritative than those that are subordinate. 1450^b18-20

CHAPTER FIVE

1450^b21-38 33. Since it has already been explained what the art of eulogy is, of what it consists, how many parts it has, and what they are, let us discuss the things by which the matters constituting poetry are enhanced. For the discussion of these things is necessary and occupies the position of a beginning point¹ in the art of eulogy and other arts. That is because the matters of which arts are constituted are of two sorts, necessary matters and matters by which they become more complete and better. Thus we say: the art of eulogy must fully attain the ends of its activity—I mean, it must reach its natural end with respect to comparison and representation. That comes about by various means.² One of them is for the ode³ to be of a magnitude such that it is whole and complete.⁴ Something that has a beginning, a middle, and an end is whole and complete. The beginning is before and must not occur with⁵ the things for which it is a beginning. The end is with⁵ the things for which it is an end, and it is not before. The

¹ Or “principle”; see above, para. 25 and note 27.

² Literally, “by things” (*bi-ashyā*).

³ Averroes uses the term *qaṣīdah*, denoting thereby a poem that consists of three parts and is constructed in such a manner that the same rhyme is used throughout the whole poem. The first part is the *nasīb* or amorous introduction (see above, para. 10, note 10); in the second part, the poet describes his ride to those whom he intends to praise or disparage; and the third part contains the praise or abuse of the person or tribe constituting the subject of the poem.

⁴ Literally, “perfect”; here and at the end of the next sentence, Averroes uses the words *kāmilah* and *kāmil* respectively in the sense of *tāmmah* and *tāmm*. See above, para. 20 and notes 4, 7, and 8.

⁵ Or perhaps “after”; Averroes may be following the lead of the old Arabic translation in which *ma'* is used to render Aristotle's *meta*. Note that in the third sentence here, he explains that “the middle . . . is in the position of being before and after. . . .”

middle is before and with⁵ and, because it is in the position of being before and after, the middle is better than the two extremes. Indeed, the courageous are those whose position in warfare is between that of the cowardly and that of the rash, which is the mean⁶ position. Similarly, the excellent limit in composition is the mean;⁶ it is composed of the extremes, whereas they are not composed of it. That which is in the middle must not be a mean⁶—that is, an optimal thing—with respect to composition and order alone, but also with respect to quantity. Since that is so, the ode must have a beginning, a middle, and an end; and each one of these parts must be a mean⁶ with respect to quantity. Similarly, the whole composed of them must be of a definite scope and not of any chance magnitude. That is because excellence in a composed thing is due to two things: one is order, and the second is quantity. Thus, in relation to the individuals of its species, a small-sized animal is not said to be excellent.

34. In this, the situation with respect to poetical discourse is like that with respect to demonstrative instruction—I mean, that if instruction is of short duration, it will not be understood well; nor if it is longer than it ought to be, because the one learning will be overcome by forgetfulness. The situation with respect to that is like looking at a sensible object⁷—I mean, it is excellent to look at a sensible object⁷ when there is a mean distance between the one who is looking and it, but not when it is very far away nor when it is very close.

35. What occurs with respect to instruction itself occurs with respect to poetic statements—I mean, that if the ode is short, the parts of the eulogy are not thoroughly covered; and if it is long, the listeners cannot remember its parts so that when they hear the final 1451^a4-11

⁶ The word is the same one translated heretofore as “middle” (*wasaf*), but Averroes now alters its meaning.

⁷ Literally, “something perceived by the senses” (*al-maḥsūs*).

parts they have already forgotten the first ones. The rhetorical statements used in competition have no naturally defined scope. Therefore it was necessary for people to measure the time of competition between the contestants either by means of a water device—as was the custom among the Greeks, since they used to have recourse only to enthymemes—or by fixing the days—as with us, since it is only to externally persuasive things that recourse is had in contests among us. Therefore if the art of eulogy had to do with competition, it would be necessary to measure the time of the competition by water clocks or something else. Since this is not the case, however, the art of poetry must have a natural limit just as existing things have a natural scope.⁸ That is, just as all generated things come to have a naturally defined magnitude when no bad luck impedes them in the course of generation, so too must it be with poetical statements and especially with the two sorts of representation—I mean, the one that passes from one contrary to another or that represents the thing itself without passing to its contrary.⁹

1451^a18-19 36. He said: a poem's constitution is enhanced by not mentioning at length the several things that occur to the single thing the poem is about.¹⁰ Indeed, several things occur to a single entity,¹¹ just as a single designated entity¹¹ has several activities.

1451^a19-35 37. He said: it seems that not all poets have been mindful of this. Rather, with the exception of Homer, they would pass from one thing to another and would not stick to one single purpose. You will find that this frequently occurs in the poems of the Arabs and of the moderns,¹² especially with respect to eulogy—I mean,

⁸ The text has the plural (*al-aqdār al-ṭabīʿiyyah*).

⁹ The reference is to reversal and discovery; see above, para. 25.

¹⁰ Literally, "the single thing intended by the poem" (*al-shaiʿ al-wāḥid al-maṣṣūd bi al-shiʿr*).

¹¹ Literally, "thing" (*shaiʿ*).

¹² See above, Introduction, note 25. There are four poetical periods or classes generally recognized in Arabic literary theory: pre-

that when any one of the reasons for which a man is praised offers itself to them, like a sword or a bow, they busy themselves with its representation and turn away from mentioning the man being praised. In general, art must resemble nature—I mean, it should do everything it does for the sake of a single purpose and a single end. Since that is the case, comparison and representation must be of a single thing and directed to a single purpose;¹³ its parts must have a definite magnitude; it must have a beginning, middle, and end; and its middle must be the most excellent part. For when existing things that have order and are finely organized are deprived of their order, they no longer have a particularly characteristic activity.

38. He said: from what has been said about the intention of poetical statements, it is clear that representation that comes about by means of false inventions—namely, the things called parables and stories like what is in *Kalīlah wa Dimnah*¹⁴—is not part of the poet's activity. Indeed, the poet speaks only about existing or possible matters, because these are the things he seeks¹⁵ to have people flee or pursue or for which he seeks¹⁶ a congruous comparison as was said with re-

1451^a36-
1451^b14

Islamic or *Jāhilī*, contemporary to Muhammad or *Mukhadramī* (1/622-11/632), Islamic or *Islāmī* (11/632-133/750), modern or *Muḥdath* (133/750-656/1258). Though overlapping with the modern period, Averroes seems to use the term “recent” (*muta’akkkhir*) to refer to his own time. See Ibn Rashīq, *al-‘Umdah*, vol. 1, p. 114.

¹³ Literally, “and have a single purpose intended by it” (*wa maqṣūdān bih gharaḍ wāḥid*).

¹⁴ Though both manuscripts have *Dimnah wa Kalīlah*, the work is known as *Kalīlah wa Dimnah*. It is a tale fitting into the mirror for princes genre that was written about 300 in Kashmir in Sanskrit and then translated into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa’ (102/720-139/756) by the intermediary of Persian. The title comes from the corruption of the Sanskrit names of the two principal characters, the jackals Karaṭaka and Damanaka. For the reference to “the intention of poetical statements,” see above, paras. 8 and 20-21.

¹⁵ Literally, “he intends” (*yaqṣid*).

¹⁶ Here “he seeks” is my addition.

spect to the headings of representation.¹⁷ Those who do make parables and stories are making something other than what poets make, even if they have made those invented parables and tales in metered speech. That is because even though both share in using meter, the one completes the work he is intent upon—namely, the prudence to be provided through the invented tales—by means of his myth even if it is not in meter, whereas the poet does not completely attain his intended imitation except by means of meter. The one who makes invented parables and stories invents individuals who do not exist at all and sets down names for them. The poet, on the other hand, only sets down names for existing things, and sometimes they speak¹⁸ about universal things. Therefore the art of poetry is closer to philosophy than the art of inventing parables. What he has said here, which accords with their custom in poetry, seems to be something natural to natural nations.

1451^b15- 39. He said: in the art of eulogy one must above all
1452^a1 have recourse to existing matters and not to those with
invented names for representations of things, for eulogy is directed toward provoking voluntary actions. When the actions are possible, persuasion with respect to them—I mean, the poetic assent that provokes the soul to pursuit or to flight—takes place more readily. For non-existing things, names are very seldom set down or invented in the art of eulogy—as when they set liberality down as an individual then set down actions for him, making representations of them, and exaggerate in praising him. Even if this type of imitation has a not insignificant usefulness for relating the

¹⁷ See above, paras. 8-11. Note, however, that in para. 12 Averroes claims that he has now discussed the sorts of comparisons and their headings. In other words, he takes comparison (*tashbīh*) and representation (*muḥākāh*) to be virtually synonymous terms. See also para. 4 and note 18.

¹⁸ Though the verb is plural and has no clear subject, it must refer to poets generally.

actions and affections of that invented thing to existing matters, one ought not to have recourse to it in the art of eulogy. Indeed, this type of imitation is not agreeable to all natures; rather, many people may laugh at it and make light of it. The best to be found under this heading among the Arabs, even though it is not such as to encourage virtue, is the statement of al-A'shā:

Upon my life, watchful eyes have perceived
 a fire's light burning on the rise;
 Blazing for two cold men seeking its warmth,
 Generosity and al-Muḥalliq, night-long at
 the fire;
 Having sucked milk from the breast of a single
 mother, they swore
 by her dark nipple never to become
 sundered.¹⁹

If this is so, it is clear that the poet is a poet insofar as he makes myths and meters to the same extent as he makes comparisons and representations.²⁰ And he makes comparisons²¹ of existing voluntary matters, although there is no stipulation upon him that only matters that are existing be represented. Rather, he might represent matters that are presumed to be possible. Nor is he therein any less a poet than he is in making a representation of existing matters, for there is nothing to prevent those things from existing in the same manner as things existing now. In poetic imitation there is no need of invented myths like these, nor does the exceptionally fine poet need to complete his rep-

¹⁹ See al-A'shā Maimūn Ibn Qais (ca. 565-8/629), *Dīwān*, pp. 223-225. His nickname, "al-A'shā" means "the nearsighted man." In this imaginative linking of al-Muḥalliq with generosity, al-A'shā praises for his hospitality an otherwise poor and unknown man with several daughters whose marriages he despaired of being able to arrange; see Ibn Rashīq, *al-'Umdah*, vol. 1, pp. 48-49.

²⁰ The text has the singular (*al-tashbīḥ wa al-muḥākāh*).

²¹ The text has the singular (*al-tashbīḥ*).

resentation by means of external matters—namely, what is feigned by means of dissimulation and delivery. Indeed, only those who pretend to be poets employ them²²—I mean, those who think they are poets and are not poets. True poets do not employ them,²² except when they want to confront thereby the sham poets' use of them.²² When they confront excellent poets, they do not employ them.²²

1452^a1-7 40. In some instances, the exceptionally fine poets²³ may be obliged to resort to employing things external to the pillar of poetry because perfect things that can be completely represented do not occur in every instance. Indeed, it is difficult to represent deficient things by statement, and so they resort to representing them by means of external things. This occurs especially when they are intent upon representing beliefs because, being neither actions nor substances, it is dif-

²² The object here is denoted by a singular pronoun (*hu*) but clearly refers to "external matters" (*al-umūr allatī min khārij*), perhaps because they were first referred to by a singular verb in the passive voice—"what is feigned by means of dissimulation and delivery" (*wa huwa alladhī yudda'ā nifāqan wa akhdhan bi al-wujūh*). In principle, delivery pertains to the recitation of the poem and thus to the activity of the rhapsode (*munshid*); see above, para. 20, note 9. Though he does not link dissimulation with the rhapsode's activity, Averroes argues that it and delivery, as well as "the attitudes suggested by the poet's voice and manner," belong more properly to the art of rhetoric; see above, para. 31, and below, para. 77.

²³ The word "poets" is my addition. The term translated here and in the preceding paragraph as "exceptionally fine" is *muftiq*. According to Ibn Rashīq, there are four divisions of poets: the poet who is an excellent poet and also excels in reciting the poetry of his predecessors, *khindhīdh*; the poet who is an excellent poet, but who does not recite the poetry of others, *muftiq*; the poet who is merely a little better than a bad poet, *shā'ir faqat*; and the poet who is not of any worth, *shu'rūr*. In this same context, he also says that the *fahl* poet is equivalent to the *khindhīdh* type of poet; see *al-'Umdah*, vol. 1, pp. 114-115. In para. 71, below, Averroes links the terms *fahl* and *muftiq* as complementary ways of speaking of outstanding poets. By citing a verse of Imru' al-Qais immediately afterwards, Averroes seems to suggest that he is to be considered as such a poet—one of the "masterly and exceptionally fine poets."

ficult to imitate them. These external things may occasionally be mixed in with poetic representations, as though they happened to be placed there by chance.²⁴ And since things that are such as to come about by chance are amazing, they have an amazing effect.

41. He said: the excellence of many poetic statements comes from simple, non-multifarious representation. Indeed, the excellence of many of them comes from the comparison and representation itself. That is, the situation with respect to comparison is the same as that with respect to deeds. Just as some deeds are accomplished by a single, simple action and others by a complex action, so is it with representation. Simple representation is that in which one of the two kinds of imitation is employed—I mean, the kind called reversal or the kind called discovery²⁵—whereas complex representation is that in which both sorts are employed. That happens either by beginning with reversal and then turning to discovery or by beginning with discovery and then turning to reversal. The sanctioned way is to begin with reversal and then turn to discovery, for there is a big difference between beginning with reversal and then turning to discovery as against beginning with discovery and then turning to reversal.

42. He said: by reversal, I mean first representing the contrary of what is intended to be praised by something that the soul dislikes and then turning to a representation of the praised thing itself—as when one wants to represent happiness and happy people one begins by first representing misery and miserable people, then turns to a representation of happy people and does so by means of the contrary of that by which he represented miserable people. Now discovery is simply representation of something.

²⁴ Literally, “by chance, unintentionally” (*bi al-ittifāq min ghair qaṣad*).

²⁵ See above, para. 25 and note 26.

1452^a32-33 43. He said: the finest kind of discovery is the one mixed with reversal.

1452^a33-35 44. He said: discovery and reversal may be employed with respect to both inanimate and animate things, not intending thereby action or forbearance but simply imitation—I mean, congruity.

45. This kind of discovery that he mentioned—I mean, discovery and reversal with respect to inanimate things—predominates in the poems of the Arabs. It is like the statement of Abū al-Ṭayyib [al-Mutanabbī]:

Many a stealthy visit shrewder than the wolf's
 did I make to you among the Bedouins as
 they slumbered;
 I slip among them while night's blackness
 intercedes for me,
 and I turn back as dawn's whiteness tempts
 them to me.²⁶

Now the first verse is discovery and the second reversal. Because these two verses combine both sorts of representation, they are exceptionally fine.

1452^a38-1452^b1 46. He said: human discovery and reversal are employed for pursuit and flight.²⁷ This kind of discovery is the one that arouses compassion in the soul at times and fear at other times. It is this that is needed in the art of praising noble human actions and satirizing base ones.

1452^b9-13 47. He said: these two parts that we have told about are both parts of the art of eulogy. There is a third part here, namely, the part that engenders the affections of the soul—I mean, the affections of fear, com-

²⁶ See Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī (303/905-354/965), *Dīwān*, vol. 1, p. 161. These lines are from the beginning of the ode, and al-Mutanabbī is talking about his own courage. The inanimate things used here are, of course, the blackness of night and the whiteness of dawn.

²⁷ That is, for encouraging people to pursue or flee from something.

passion, and sadness. It comes about by the mention of the disasters and calamities that afflict people, for these are the things that evoke compassion and fear. It is one of the major parts for encouraging the actions they aim at²⁸ in eulogy.

²⁸ Literally, "intended by them" (*maqṣūd . . . ʿindahum*).

CHAPTER SIX

1452^b14-16 48. He said: we have already spoken about the parts of the art of eulogy with respect to quality.¹ Now we ought to speak about its parts with respect to quantity. He mentions, in this sense, parts particularly characteristic of their poems.

49. Three of them are found in the poems of the Arabs. There is the part that performs the function of the introduction to an oration for them; in it, they mention the [deserted] abodes and the traces [of the beloved] and sing of love.² The second part is the eulogy. The third part performs the function of the conclusion to an oration. For them, this part is above all either a plea on behalf of the praised person or an encomium of the poem that has been recited. The first part is better known than this latter one. Therefore, they call the transition from the first to the second part *istiṭrād*.³ Sometimes they advance praises without any introductions—as in Abū Tammām's statement:

¹ See above, paras. 21-47, especially paras. 21-31.

² Conventionally, the *nasīb* part of the ode or *qaṣīdah* (see above, para. 10, note 10, and para. 33, note 3) is preceded by the poet bewailing the absence of his beloved as he speaks about the now deserted encampments or dwellings where he formerly visited with her or speaks about other vestiges that call her image back to mind; see below, para. 66, and Ibn Qutaibah, *Kitāb al-Shi'r wa al-Shu'arā'*, vol. 1, p. 20, or as quoted in Reynold A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 77.

³ Literally, "digression"; see also para. 73, below. According to Ibn Rashīq, *istiṭrād* is a term used to denote a transition or turning from one part of a poem to another. In this respect, *istiṭrād* is like a *khurūj* or a "turning back." When the transition is done well, it can be called a *khurūj*, a *takhalluṣ*, or a *tawaṣṣul*. But when it is too lengthy or complicated, it is called an *istiṭrād*. See *al-'Umdah*, vol. 1, pp. 234-239.

It is easy for us to speak and for you to act⁴

and as in Abū al-Ṭayyib's statement:

From his lot in life each man has what he is accustomed to.⁵

50. When he finished enumerating the parts of poetry among them, he said: we have told about those parts of the art of eulogy that have to do with quality and those that have to do with quantity. Subsequently, we will tell about the topics from which it is possible to make the art of eulogy and will add that to what has preceded. 1452^b26-27

51. He said: as has been said, eulogies ought to be composed not of simple representations but of a mixture of the kinds of discoveries and reversals⁶ and of the representations⁶ that impose fear-provoking and tender affections upon souls. That is because eulogies intended to encourage the virtues must be composed of the representation of virtues and the representation of the fearsome and sorrowful things by which one is distressed—namely, the misery that comes from an undeserved loss of virtue. That is because by means of these things the soul is more intensely moved to ac- 1452^b30-36

⁴ See Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, vol. 2, p. 306. This is the opening half-verse of an ode in praise of Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Zayyāt (173/789-233/848), a man of letters and poet who served as vizier under the caliphs al-Muʿtaṣim, al-Wāthiq, and al-Mutawakkil. The rest of the verse reads:

And we recall your acts of intelligence so graciously bestowed.

⁵ See Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān*, vol. 1, p. 281. This, too, is the opening half-verse of an ode, one in which Abū al-Ṭayyib praises Saif al-Dawlah. The rest of the verse reads:

And the custom of Saif al-Dawlah is to thrust at the enemy.

In his *Poems of al-Mutanabbī*, pp. 76-82, A. J. Arberry translates the whole ode.

⁶ The text has the singular. For the reference to the earlier discussion that eulogies not be composed of simple representations, see above paras. 25 and 41-45.

cept the virtues. Indeed, there is nothing in the poet's turning from a representation of virtue to a representation of non-virtue or from a representation of a virtuous man to a representation of a non-virtuous man that encourages or prompts anyone to perform virtuous deeds, since it does not compel one to have any additional attachment to them nor any fear. These two things must be found in eulogious statements. That comes about when one turns from a representation of virtues to a representation of misery and bad luck befalling excellent people or when one turns from this to a representation of virtuous people. Indeed, this representation makes souls become tender and prompts them to accept the virtues. You will find most of the representations occurring in scriptural statements⁷ to be of this sort mentioned by him, since they are eulogious statements that designate action—like what is recounted about the tale of Joseph, God's blessing upon him, and his brothers as well as other short stories that are called exhortations.

1453^a4-17 52. He said: compassion and tenderness are induced by mentioning the misery unnecessarily occurring to someone who does not deserve it. Now the mention of these things induces fear because it is imagined that the harm might befall a lesser person—I mean, the listener himself—since he is even more susceptible to that. Sadness and compassion are induced because of these things befalling someone who does not deserve them. When the virtues are mentioned by themselves, no fear about their passing away nor any compassion or attachment befalls the soul. Thus it is incumbent upon anyone who wants to encourage virtue that he incorporate as part of his rep-

⁷ Or, "statements of the Divine Law" (*al-aqāwīl al-shar'īyyah*); for the tale of Joseph and his brothers, see the Quran 12:4-20. As noted in the introduction, Averroes differs markedly from Aristotle in his explanation here of how the passions of pity and fear are to be evoked.

resentation the things that evoke sadness, fear, and compassion.

53. He said: therefore, the finest eulogies to be found in the art of poetry are the eulogies having this composition—I mean, a mention of the virtues as well as of sorrowful, fearsome, and tender things. 1453^a23-24

54. He said: therefore, they err who censure anyone making these myths part of his poetry. A sign that this is useful in eulogy is that instances of anger may be brought into the art of military eulogy. Anger is sadness along with an intense desire for revenge. If that is so, then mentioning the calamities and disasters that afflict outstanding people compels one to have more love for them and to be fearful of the virtues passing away. Now some people may bring a representation of defects into eulogies because there is a type of reversal in them. Blaming defects is more suited to the art of satire, however, than to the art of eulogy. Therefore they ought not to be imitated in eulogies as a primary intention but rather for the sake of reversal. When defects are mentioned in a poem of eulogy, there is inevitably a mention of odious enemies in it. Indeed, eulogies are based on the deeds of patrons and friends being mentioned. Now neither the enemy of an enemy nor the friend of a friend is mentioned in praising or blaming, since they are neither friends nor enemies. 1453^a24-39

55. He said: the frightening and sorrowful myth ought to be brought forth in the same way as that which occurs to sight—he means, so that it will incur assent. For when there is doubt about the myth or something brings forth doubt about it, it does not accomplish its intended action. That is because as long as a man does not assent to it, he will not be terrified of it nor feel pity about it. What he mentions here is the reason that many of those who do not assent to the scriptural narrative⁸ become wicked. For people are 1453^b3-6

⁸ Or, “the narrative of the Divine Law” (*al-qaṣaṣ al-sharʿī*).

naturally set in motion by one of two arguments, either a demonstrative argument or a non-demonstrative argument. This low sort of people has failed to be moved by either of these two arguments.

1453^b8-10 56. He said: some poets bring into eulogies representations of things with the sole intention of arousing amazement, without them being frightening or sorrowful. You frequently find examples of all these things in scriptural writings,⁹ since eulogies of the virtues are not found in the poems of the Arabs. And in this time of ours, they are to be found only in the written traditions.

1453^b10-11 57. He said: this activity does not have anything at all in common with the art of eulogy. That is because one does not seek just any chance pleasure in the art of poetry. Rather, in it one seeks only to become pleased by the imitation of the virtues, and this is the pleasure suited to the art of eulogy.

1453^b13-23 58. He said: the things whose representation produces pleasure without any accompanying sadness or fear are known. And a man is able to know which things have the pleasantness of their representation accompanied by compassion and fear when he looks into those things that are the hardest of vicissitudes to be afflicted by and into those slight and insignificant things that are not accompanied by any great sadness or fear. Examples of the former things are the calamities and disasters that are voluntarily inflicted by one friend on another, not those that are inflicted by one enemy on another. For a man does not become sad or feel pity about the evil that one enemy inflicts upon another in the way he becomes sad and fearful about the evil inflicted by one friend upon another. Even if the former is accompanied by pain, it is not like the pain that accompanies the evil loved ones inflict upon one another—like brothers killing one another, fathers killing sons, or sons fathers. Regarding what he

⁹ Or, "writings of the Divine Law" (*al-maktūbāt al-sharʿiyyah*).

mentions here, the story of Abraham, may peace be upon him, and what he was ordered to do to his son is a statement that most inspires sorrow and fear.¹⁰

59. He said: praise ought to be about virtuous actions that originate from will and knowledge. For some things are done due to will and knowledge, some are done due neither to will nor to knowledge, and some are done due to knowledge but not to will or due to will but not to knowledge. Similarly, some actions are by someone known and others by someone unknown. Now when an action originates from lack of knowledge and will, it does not fall under the heading of praiseworthy. The same holds when it originates from an unknown person, because it then has greater affinity to lies than to poetry and must not be represented. Actions that undoubtedly originate from will, knowledge, and known persons can be handled by means of the finest discovery.

1453^b27-36

60. He said: we have already sufficiently discussed the way to enhance the constituent matters from which poems are composed and how they ought to be composed. Now we must discuss the characters¹¹ that ought to be represented in eulogy. We say: the character-traits that are represented in excellent eulogy—I mean, the one that enhances the impression they have upon the listeners—are four. One is character-traits that are good and virtuous with respect to that praised person, for what influences the soul is the representation of true things found in the praised person. And there is a certain good in every genus, even if there are other things in it that are not good. The second is that the character-traits be appropriate for the praised person and correct for him; that is, the character-traits appropriate for a woman are not appropriate for a man. The third is that of the character-

1454^a13-36

¹⁰ See the Quran, 37:100-113.

¹¹ See above, para. 21, note 15. In what follows, Averroes uses the term *ʿādāt* in the more usual sense of character-traits.

traits to be found in him, they be the ones most completely like him and the ones that most completely suit him. The fourth is that they be balanced and mid-way between the extremes. This is so, because vicious character-traits¹² are not praised. The same holds for character-traits that are not appropriate for the praised person, even if they are excellent, and for appropriate character-traits that are not found to be most completely like him or to exist in him fully. Of character-traits that are good and that denote a good, virtuous natural temperament,¹³ some are truly so, some are generally accepted as such, and some resemble both these cases. The excellent character-traits are either truly so, seem to be truly so, are generally accepted as being so, or seem to be generally accepted as being so. All these fall under eulogy.

1454^a37- 61. He said: the endings of poems and of odes must
1454^b7 in general point to the just mentioned character-traits that are the object of the eulogy, as is the case with the endings of orations. Nor must the poet introduce into his poem any representation external to the argument, except to the extent that those addressed can endure, so as not to be charged with exaggeration and with straying from the path of poetry or with being remiss.

1454^b8-15 62. He said: comparison and representation are the eulogies of things of the utmost excellence. Just as the skilled painter depicts something the way it exists even to the point of depicting the angry and the lazy despite their being attributes of the soul, so too must the poet in his representation depict everything just as it is even to the point of representing the moral habits and the dispositions of the soul. He mentioned an example of

¹² Here, and throughout the rest of the paragraph as well as in the next paragraph, Averroes uses an alternative plural (*'awā'id*) instead of the more customary *'ādāt*.

¹³ The term is *khulq*; see above, para. 21, note 15, and para. 23. When Averroes uses the plural of this term (*akhhlāq*) in the paragraph after the next, I translate it as "moral habits."

that in a poem by Homer when he described an incident happening to someone. Of this sort of imitation—I mean, that which represents a disposition of the soul—is the statement of Abū al-Ṭayyib describing the arrival of the Byzantine emissary to Saif al-Dawlah:

He came to you his head almost denying his neck
and in his terror his joints trembling;
The straightness of the two rows of guards
directed his progress
toward you, whenever his tremors made
him swerve.¹⁴

63. He said: in his imitative depictions and representations the poet must stick closely to the things customarily employed in comparison and not go beyond the path of poetry in that respect. 1454^b15-16

64. He said: there are many kinds of discoveries that proceed in this fashion—I mean, a representation proceeding in an excellent fashion according to artful method. Among them is for the representation of sense-perceptible things to be made by means of sense-perceptible things such that anyone who looks at them becomes uncertain and fancies that they are indeed those things because of the sense-perceptible characteristics they have in common. That is like their calling some of the constellations¹⁵ of the stars “crab”¹⁶ and others “spear-handle”¹⁷ because their shape makes it possible to fancy that this is what they are. The majority of comparisons among the Arabs come back to this point. That is why for them the particles of comparison entail uncertainty. Whenever these things that give rise to fancy are closer to inducing uncer- 1454^b19-21

¹⁴ See Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān*, vol. 3, p. 113.

¹⁵ Literally, “forms” (*ṣuwar*).

¹⁶ That is to say, “Cancer” (*saraṭān*).

¹⁷ This seems to be a reference to Sagittarius (i.e. the constellation shaped like a centaur drawing a bow). It is usually referred to as *al-Rāmī* (“archer”) in Arabic.

tainty, they constitute a more complete comparison; and whenever they are further away from inducing uncertainty, they constitute a more defective comparison. These latter are far-fetched representations and ought to be rejected. That is like the statement of Imru' al-Qais about a mare:

Chestnut-brown as though she were a shuttle on
a loom¹⁸

and like his statement:

When she comes forward, you would say: a
gourd
of black immersed in a pool;
And when she turns back, you would say:
perfectly round
smooth stones without a blemish¹⁹

even though this latter one is closer than the first one because there is a certain contrast²⁰ in it. With others,²¹ the representation of conceptual matters comes about by means of sense-perceptible matters when the latter have actions commensurate with those concepts so that it is fancied that this is what they are—like their

¹⁸ The half-verse is from Imru' al-Qais Ibn Hunduj Ibn Hujr Ibn al-Hārith al-Kindī, an early and very famous pre-Islamic poet who died before 550; see *Dīwān*, p. 145. The first half of the verse reads:

Upon a strong, speedy steed whose flesh running had made
firm.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 82. In the first verse, the poet compares the chest and neck of the mare to a gourd of a dark green, almost ashen-black, color. As she approaches, the fullness of her chest between her front legs resembles the base of a gourd; the chest then narrows to form the neck, again similar to a gourd. According to the commentators, the image of the gourd being "immersed in a pool" is meant to evoke the smoothness and sleekness of the mare's coat.

²⁰ The term is *muqābalah* and is usually used by Averroes to mean "opposite"; see Averroes' *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's De Interpretatione*, paras. 23 and 85. See also Ibn Rashīq, *al-'Umdah*, vol. 2, pp. 15-20, for a similar explanation.

²¹ That is, with other kinds of discoveries that proceed according to artful method; see para. 64, beginning.

saying of kindness that it is a collar about the neck and that beneficence is a bond, as Abū al-Ṭayyib said:

Whoever finds beneficence to be a bond binds
himself.²²

This frequently occurs in the poems of the Arabs. There is, for instance, the statement of Imru' al-Qais:

A binder of wild beasts, a well-built steed.²³

With this, too, whatever is not commensurate or is dissimilar ought to be rejected. This is frequently found in the poems of the moderns and especially in the poetry of Abū Tammām—like his saying:

Do not make me drink the water of censure.²⁴

After all, water does not correspond to censure. Even more foolish than this is his saying:

The mound of death is curdled and sweet milk.²⁵

Just as what is found to be far-fetched here is to be rejected, so too the comparison by means of what is

²² See Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān*, vol. 1, p. 292.

²³ See Imru' al-Qais, *Dīwān*, p. 133. This is from his famous *Mu'allaqah*. Arberry translates the whole poem in *The Seven Odes*, pp. 61-66, and on p. 64 renders this part of the half-verse as:

outstripping the wild game, huge-bodied.

In other words, his translation completely neglects the image of binding.

²⁴ See Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, vol. 1, p. 178. The complete verse reads:

Do not make me drink the water of censure, for I
am in love and have already made sweet the water of my
tears.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 258. The first part of the verse reads:

On the day of battle, he gave the surrounding lions their full.

The ode is in praise of the military commander Abū Sa'īd Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf al-Thaghri; and this verse seems to advance the notion that death, though bitter for the vanquished, is sweet for the conqueror.

found to be lowly ought to be rejected and the comparison be of virtuous things. An example of a comparison of the illustrious by means of the lowly is the statement of the *rajaz* poet:

When the sun is sinking but has not yet done so,
it is on the horizon like a squinter's eye.²⁶

and as some poet said in praising Saif al-Dawlah:

The hapless Byzantines knew that you would fall
upon them
one day, just as you fell upon the
Domesticus;
They were like mice whispering behind a wall,
and you were like a cat about to pounce on
them.²⁷

1454^b30-31 65. He said: there is another kind of poetry here, namely, the poems that fall more under the heading of assent and persuasion than under the heading of imitation and that are closer to rhetorical examples than to poetical representation. This genus of poetry that he mentioned occurs frequently in the poetry of Abū al-Ṭayyib—like his statement:

Coloring the lids of the eyes with kohl is not like
having natural kohl²⁸

²⁶ The poet referred to here is Abū al-Najm al-Faḍl Ibn Qudamah al-ʿIjlī, who died before 125/743. These verses are from his *Lāmiyyah* ode; see *Lāmiyyat Abī al-Najm*, in *al-Tarāʾif al-Adabiyyah*, p. 69. The ode is in praise of the Caliph Hishām Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (reigned 105/724-125/743) who had a strabismus. Poetry written in the *rajaz* style has an irregular iambic meter of two or three feet to the verse, and all verses rhyme with each other. Unlike the other kinds of poetry, *rajaz* style poems are not divided into hemistiches. Usually this kind of poetry is extemporaneous and is recited a few lines at a time.

²⁷ The author of the lines is not known. The second of these verses, however, is cited in the *Thamarāt al-Awrāq* of Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Hijjah al-Ḥamawī (died 837/1437), vol. 1, p. 119. Byzantine field commanders were generally referred to by the term "Domesticus."

²⁸ See Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān*, vol. 3, p. 87; the first half of the verse:

and his statement:

When the sun has risen you have no need of
Saturn.²⁹

The statement of Abū Firās is the finest one with respect to this concept:

We are people who admit of no middle ground;
we are in the lead before mankind or in the
grave;
For lofty things we deem our souls of little
importance,
for whoever proposes to a fair damsel is not
held back by the dowry.³⁰

66. He said: the third kind of representation is the representation that takes place by means of memory. That is, the poet adduces something that causes something else to be remembered—like one man seeing another man's handwriting and being reminded of him; if he is dead, he feels sorrow for him, and if he is living, he longs for him. This is frequently found in the poems of the Arabs—like the saying of Mutammim Ibn Nuwairah: 1454^b37-1455^a1

They said: do you weep over every grave you see
because of a grave that is between al-Liwā
and al-Dakādik?
So I replied to them, surely grief evokes grief,

for your forbearance is not something one can pretend to shows that the poet is trying to praise the natural virtues of Saif al-Dawlah, the one to whom the ode is dedicated.

²⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 81. This is an earlier verse in the same ode. Speaking to himself, the poet says in the first half of the verse:

Seize what you see and leave aside the things you hear.

Then, comparing Saif al-Dawlah to the sun and other rulers to lesser celestial bodies, al-Mutanabbī concentrates on eulogizing him.

³⁰ See Abū Firās al-Ḥārith Ibn Sa'īd Ibn Ḥamdān al-Ḥamdānī (320/932-348/959), *Dīwān*, vol. 2, p. 214.

leave me alone, for me every grave is the
grave of Mālik.³¹

The statement of Qais al-Majnūn is another one:

A herald called while we were in al-Khaif near
Minā
and unwittingly kindled the sorrows of my
heart;
By the name Lailā he called to someone else;
then it was as if
in saying Lailā, he aroused a bird within my
breast.³²

The statement of al-Khansā' is one of this kind:

Sun-rise reminds me of Ṣakhr,
and I remember him at each sunset³³

as is the statement of the Hudhalī poet:

I scorn patience while still stirred up
by thoughts of our night-time shelter and
mid-day resting place;

³¹ See Mutammim Ibn Nuwairah, Abū Tamīm Abū Ibrāhīm, who died about 19/640, "Majmū'," p. 125. The poem is dedicated to his brother Mālik who was buried in al-Malā, a site in the middle of the Arabian peninsula; al-Liwā and al-Dakādik are in the immediate vicinity. His grief was so deep that while in Iraq and thus distant from al-Liwā and al-Dakādik, he composed this ode.

³² See Qais Ibn al-Mulawwah al-Majnūn Banī 'Āmīr, *Dīwān*, p. 162. Because of his great love for Lailā, he is also known as Majnūn Lailā ("mad for Lailā"); he died in about 70/689. The sense of the last part of the second verse is that upon hearing the name of Lailā, Qais al-Majnūn's heart began to beat quickly or to flutter like a bird taking flight.

³³ See al-Khansā', Tumāḍir Bint 'Amr Ibn al-Hārith, who lived about 580-24/645, *Commentaires sur le Dīwān*, p. 151. This is an ode to her brother, Ṣakhr. According to the commentaries, al-Khansā' is reminded of the military exploits of her brother by the rising sun and of his hospitality to guests by its setting. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 127, translates the verse as follows:

Sunrise awakens in me the sad remembrance
of Ṣakhr, and I recall him at every sunset.

So, too, when I discern the light of morning,
a heavy night comes back upon me.³⁴

This kind is frequent in the poems of the Arabs. Part of this topic is their bringing loved ones back to mind by means of [deserted] abodes and the traces of campsites—as he said:

Halt, both of you, let us weep for the memory of
a loved one and an abode.³⁵

The custom of the Arabs of bringing loved ones back to mind by means of an apparition and letting it take the place of the person being imitated comes close to this topic—as their poet said:

I cover myself, but find no sleep,
perhaps your apparition will meet my own;
And going out away from the tents, perhaps
I can talk about you to my soul in secret and
alone.³⁶

The Arabs and the moderns are versatile in their recourse to apparition and use it in many ways. It seems therefore to belong to the topics particularly charac-

³⁴ The reference is to Abū Khirāsh Khuwailid Ibn Murrah, who died in about 29/650; see *Kitāb Sharḥ Ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn*, vol. 3, p. 1190. The poet is lamenting his brother and alludes to the sadness caused by his memories of places where they used to rest during the heat of the day or spend the night. It is not unusual for Averroes to refer to Abū Khirāsh simply as “the Hudhalī poet,” for this tribe is renowned for its abundance of poets. Moreover, it is the only tribe whose tribal *dīwān* has been passed down to us complete.

³⁵ The reference is to Imruʿ al-Qais; see *Dīwān*, p. 124. This is the opening line of his famous *Muʿallaqah* and is translated by Arberry as:

Halt, friends both! Let us weep, recalling a love and a lodging.

See *The Seven Odes*, p. 61; as mentioned above, note 23, Arberry provides a translation of the whole ode on pp. 61-66.

³⁶ The reference is to Qais al-Majnūn; see his *Dīwān*, pp. 299 and 296 for the first verse and pp. 301 and 294 for the second. He is, of course, speaking about Lailā.

teristic of the *nasīb* and may fall under elegiac poetry—as al-Buḥturī said:

I lost sight of his phantom after losing sight of
him;
what an oddity of fate! Loss upon loss.³⁷

1455^a4-6 67. He said: the fourth kind of representation is to mention that a certain individual is similar to another very same kind of individual. This similarity has to do only with the physical constitution or the natural temperament—like someone saying “someone resembling Joseph has come” when no one but so and so came. Of this sort is the statement of Imru’ al-Qais:

You will recognize the good qualities of his
father in him.³⁸

Making a similarity explicit is different from comparison. Comparison entails inducing uncertainty, and making explicit a similarity between two things is verifying the existence of the similarity and is the goal³⁹ of imitative congruity—I mean, when it is said that one person is similar to another.

1455^a12-13 68. He said: the fifth kind is that which the sophisticated sort of poets employ, namely, false exaggeration. This is frequent among the poems of the Arabs and the moderns—like that statement of al-Nābighah:

The swords cut through the double-knit coat of
mail
and ignite on the plate-armor the fire of the
firefly⁴⁰

³⁷ See al-Buḥturī al-Walid Ibn ‘Ubaid Ibn Yaḥyā Abū ‘Ubādah al-Ṭā’i (206/821-284/897), *Dīwān*, vol. 1, p. 180. The poet laments a young servant whom he had sold.

³⁸ See Imru’ al-Qais, *Dīwān*, p. 85.

³⁹ Or, “the end” (*al-ghāyah*). For a fuller explanation of comparison inducing uncertainty, see above, para. 64.

⁴⁰ See al-Nābighah al-Ḍhubayānī Ziyād Ibn Mu‘āwiyah Ibn Ḍibāb Abū Umāmah, a pre-Islamic poet who lived from about 550 until about 602, *Dīwān*, p. 61.

and the statement of another one:

Were it not for the wind letting the people of
Ḥujr hear
the clash of swords striking against sharp
blades.⁴¹

This is all falsehood. The statement of Abū al-Ṭayyib is of this sort:

Your enemy is blamed by every tongue,
even if the sun and the moon are among
your enemies.⁴²

And so is his statement in the same ode:

Were you to detest the course of the rotating
planet,
something would prevent it from rotating.⁴³

The statement of Imru' al-Qais falls under the same heading:

A modest maiden is such that if a baby ant were
to creep
upon her smock, it would leave a mark.⁴⁴

⁴¹ The reference is to Muḥalhil Ibn Rabī'ah, a pre-Islamic poet who died in about 525; see *Akḥbār al-Murāqisah* in *Dīwān Imri' al-Qais*, p. 53. The false exaggeration is that Ḥujr was in the southwest of the Arabian peninsula, whereas the war described here by the poet was fought in the far north of the peninsula.

⁴² See Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān*, vol. 4, p. 242. This is the first verse of an ode in praise of Kāfūr al-Ikhshīdī who, though the de facto ruler of Egypt since 334/946, did not declare himself ruler until 355/966. He then ruled openly until his death two years later. The enemy referred to is Shabīb al-'Uqailī who lost his life while attacking Damascus in 348/959 during an unsuccessful rebellion against Kāfūr. The term translated as "the sun and the moon" is *al-qamrān*; literally, "the two moons." A complete translation of this ode is to be found in Arberry's *Poems of al-Mutanabbī*, pp. 106-110.

⁴³ See *ibid.*, p. 247. This is the last verse of the ode just cited.

⁴⁴ See Imru' al-Qais, *Dīwān*, p. 74.

This is found frequently in the poems of the Arabs. You will find none of it in the precious Book,⁴⁵ for this genus of speech—I mean, poetry—is of the same rank as sophistical discourse in relation to demonstration. However, something commendable may be found in those who are naturally poets—like the statement of al-Mutanabbī:

How is it that this messenger was guided
 throughout his land
 when the dust of battle had not settled since
 you passed through?
 With what water did he slake the thirst of his
 chargers
 when no watering hole was left unpolluted
 with blood?⁴⁶

and his saying:

They wore embroidered fabric, not to adorn
 themselves,
 but in order to uphold beauty;
 They braided their tresses, not to be pretty,
 but from fear that their hair become
 dishevelled.⁴⁷

69. There is a sixth well-known topic here that the Arabs employ, namely, putting inanimate bodies in the place of rational beings in their speeches and petitions when the former have conditions that point to reason—like the statement of the poet:

I broke into tears when I saw Mount Tūbādh,
 and it praised the Compassionate when it
 saw me;
 So I said to it: where are those I knew so well
 dwelling around you in safety and blissful
 tranquillity?

⁴⁵ That is, the Quran.

⁴⁶ See Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān*, vol. 3, pp. 112-113.

⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 222-223.

And it said: they went away and left me their
villages for safekeeping,
for who will remain in the face of
adversity?⁴⁸

Under this heading come their addressing [deserted]
abodes and the traces of campsites and these replying
to them, as in the statement of Dhū al-Rummah:

I stopped my she-camel at a spring encampment
belonging to Mayyah,
and I kept on weeping at it and addressing it
And watering it until, from what I scattered over
it,
its stones and playgrounds were about to
speak to me⁴⁹

and the statement of 'Antarah:

The trace of an abode that does not speak
stymies you
until it speaks like the muttering deaf;
Oh abode of 'Ablah in al-Jiwā', speak!
Good morning, abode of 'Ablah, and may
you be safe.⁵⁰

In addition, there is much else similar to this in their
poems. He has already mentioned this topic in the

⁴⁸ The reference is to Qais al-Majnūn; see *Dīwān*, p. 275. Mount Tūbādh is in the Arabian peninsula. The term "the Compassionate" (*al-Rahmān*) is one of the names of God. The verses refer to the tendency of nomads to wander away from a place where they had settled, not to any great calamity that befell them.

⁴⁹ See Dhū al-Rummah, *Dīwān*, p. 38. Mayyah or Mayy Bint Ṭalbah Ibn Qais Ibn 'Āṣim al-Munqarī, also known as Umm Thawr, was the beloved of Dhū al-Rummah. In the second verse, the idea is that he watered the ground with his tears.

⁵⁰ See 'Antarah Ibn Shaddād Ibn 'Amr al-'Absī al-Falḥā', who died about 610, *Dīwān*, p. 142. These are the second and fourth verses of his *Mu'allaqah*, the whole of which is translated in Arberry's *The Seven Odes*, pp. 179-184. Note, however, that the verses he presents as the first two verses are, according to the edition of the *Dīwān* cited here, the first and fourth.

Rhetoric, noting that Homer used to have frequent recourse to it.⁵¹

- 1455^a16-17 70. He said: excellent discovery and reversal are concerned with voluntary actions. This kind of discovery is most frequently found in the precious Book—I mean, with respect to praise of virtuous actions and blame of non-virtuous actions—and is seldom found in the poems of the Arabs. An example of reversal with respect to praise is His statement, may He be exalted, from “God sets forth a likeness, a good word” to His saying “it has no steadfastness.”⁵² An example of discovery is His statement, may He be exalted, “the likeness of a grain of corn; it grows seven ears” and on to the end of the verse.⁵³ Because the poems of the Arabs are devoid of eulogies for virtuous actions and blame for defects, the precious Book heaps reproach upon them while making an exception of any of them who adjusts his speech to this genus.⁵⁴

- 1455^a22-26 71. He said: the poetical narrative becomes excel-

⁵¹ See Aristotle *Rhetoric* III.xi.1.1411^b22-4.1412^a8. Though the discussion is about metaphor and not discovery, Aristotle gives several examples of how Homer used to speak of inanimate objects as though they were animate.

⁵² See the Quran 14:24-26. The complete passage reads as follows: “Do you not see how God sets forth a likeness, a good word like a good tree whose root is firmly established and whose branches reach to the heavens? It provides its nourishment at every instant by the permission of its Lord, and God sets forth likenesses for people so that they might be reminded. The likeness of a bad word is a bad tree; it is torn up from above the earth; it has no steadfastness.”

⁵³ See the Quran 2:261. The whole verse reads: “The likeness of those who spend their money in the way of God is the likeness of a grain of corn; it grows seven ears with a hundred grains in each ear; God is bountiful to whomever He wishes, and God is widespread and knowing.”

⁵⁴ See the Quran 26:224-227. Though he does not consider this argument of Averroes, Irfan Shahid argues that the real thrust of these verses is the failure of the poets to imitate the Quran and that there is no attempt to blame them for their lying or immorality; see “Another Contribution to Koranic Exegesis: The *Sūra* of the Poets (XXVI),” pp. 8-10 and 11-12.

lent and attains utmost perfection⁵⁵ when in describing the thing or the incident taking place, the poet attains a level such that the listeners see it as though it were sense-perceptible and visible without its contrary occurring to them from this description. This is frequently found in the poetry of the masterly and exceptionally fine poets. However, this way of imitating things is found among the Arabs only with respect to indecent actions or when the intention is simply congruity in the imitation. An example of what shows up of this with respect to licentiousness is the statement of Imru' al-Qais:

I slipped to her after her people had gone to
 sleep
 slipping like a bubble of water, bit by bit;
 She said: may God beguile you! You are surely
 my downfall;
 do you not see the late-night talkers and the
 people all around me?
 And I said: By God, I will keep on sitting here
 with you
 even if they cut off my head and limbs
 before you.⁵⁶

An example of what shows up of this when the intention is simply congruity in the comparison is Dhū al-Rumma's statement describing fire:

I vied with my companions in striking a spark
 like a rooster's eye,
 and we prepared a nest to place it in;
 And I said to one of them: bring it up to you and
 give it life

⁵⁵ Literally, "completion" (*al-tammām*).

⁵⁶ See Imru' al-Qais, *Dīwān*, pp. 140-141. Note that according to the context, Averroes seems to be classifying Imru' al-Qais as one of the "masterly and exceptionally fine poets," that is, as both a *muflīq* and a *fahīl* poet; see above, para. 40, note 23.

by your breath, and feed it kindling bit by bit;
 Help it along with dry twigs, and make use of
 the east wind, setting your hands up as a
 shield for it.⁵⁷

This may be found in their poems that describe events taking place, like wars and the other things they glory in. Now al-Mutanabbī is the most excellent of those in whom this sort of imitation is found, and it frequently occurs in his poems. It is therefore recounted of him that he did not want to describe anything befalling Saif al-Dawlah that he had not witnessed.⁵⁸ Excellence in this kind of comparison is arrived at by a man first acquiring all of the ideas that pertain to the thing he intends to describe, then bringing the three parts of poetry—I mean, imitation, meter, and melody—together with those ideas.

1455^b16 72. He said: one can go on at length enumerating the topics of discoveries.⁵⁹ In that manner he indicated their abundancy and the difference among nations with respect to them.

1455^b23-26 73. He said: in every eulogy, there is a binding and a loosing⁶⁰ of its parts. It seems that what most closely

⁵⁷ See Dhū al-Rummah, *Dīwān*, pp. 175-176.

⁵⁸ This reputation is perhaps due to what he says in the first half of the verse quoted in para. 65, note 29, above.

⁵⁹ Averroes seems to have been misled here by the old Arabic translation. Discussing the use of episodes in dramatic and epic poetry, Aristotle says, "in epic poetry, they give it length." In the old Arabic translation, this is rendered as: "the making of these kinds of things goes on at length" (*wa ammā ṣan'at al-anwā' fī hādhihi fa-taṭūl*); see *Aristūṭālīs Fann al-Shi'r*, 121:7-8.

⁶⁰ Averroes follows here the old Arabic translation from the Greek that uses the terms binding (*ribāṭ*) and loosing (*hall*) to translate Aristotle's *desis* and *lisis*; see *Aristūṭālīs Fann al-Shi'r*, 122:2. Though this is an accurate translation that captures Aristotle's language well, we now tend to translate Aristotle's terms as "complication" and "dénouement" instead of "binding" and "loosing." I think, however, that Averroes' subsequent explanation can be more readily apprehended if the original sense of Aristotle's terminology is preserved. For the term *istiṭrād* ("digression") in the next sentence, see para. 49 and note 3 above.

resembles the binding found in their poems is the part that is called *istiṭrād* among us. It binds the *nasīb* part and, in general, the introduction of the ode to the eulogizing part. The loosing is a separation of one of the two parts from the other—that is, it effects a separation between them. Binding is more frequently found in the poems of the moderns—and that is like the statement of Abū Tammām:

My days and the days of my camels are passed
 between places
 of fiery heat and torrid waste,
 So that each day I leave in the desert
 the carcass of one of my camels as a feast for
 the vultures;
 But oh how far from this is a meadow so
 praiseworthy
 such that you would settle down in it with
 the praiseworthy Aḥmad⁶¹

and like the statement of Abū al-Ṭayyib:

She strolled past us between her two
 companions, and I said to her:
 how has this gazelle fawn come to be of the
 same genus as Arabs?
 She laughed, then said: just as al-Mughīth who
 appears to be
 a lion from al-Sharā but belongs to the ʿIjl
 tribe.⁶²

⁶¹ See Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, vol. 1, p. 390. The ode is in praise of Aḥmad Ibn Abī Duʿād (160/776-240/854), a poet who belonged to the Muʿtazilite sect and served as a judge under the Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim. By saying “carcass of one of my camels as a feast” (*ʿaidan min banāt al-ʿaid*), literally, “a feast from among the daughters of the feast,” the poet is punning on the word for feast and the notion of female camels from the Banī al-ʿAid tribe.

⁶² See Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān*, vol. 1, p. 112. There are two ways to explain these lines. One derives from the fact that two lines earlier, the poet described this Bedouin girl as being fair-skinned and asks her how someone so fair could stem from the dark-skinned Arabs; her answer is that she is an Arab just as someone called al-Mughīth, who looks as fierce as an Ethiopian lion, is an

Loosing is frequently found in the poems of the Arabs—as in the statement of Zuhair:

Leave this aside, and consider what is said about Harim.⁶³

1455^b32- 74. He said: there are four kinds of eulogies. Three
1456^a2 of them are simple, and these are the ones set out above. One of these is reversal; the second is discovery; and the third is affection.⁶⁴ He said: like what is said of people in Hell, for this is sorrowful and terrifying. The fourth is what is a composite of these, either all three of them or two of them. You ought to know that no examples of these four kinds of eulogies for the sake of virtuous voluntary action are to be found in the poems of the Arabs. They are, however, frequently found in the precious Book.

1456^a2-7 75. He said: some poets excel at long odes, whereas others excel at short poems and short odes—the latter being called *muqatta'āt* among us. The reason for this is that since it is the excellent poet who describes everything according to its particular characteristics and its core, and with respect to each of the things described these vary as to whether they are many or few, the best imitation must be the one that does not go beyond the particular characteristics of the thing or its reality. Now some people are either accustomed or temperamentally disposed to imitate things that have

Arab. The other explanation stems from the juxtaposing of the literal meaning of the name of al-Mughīth's tribe, 'Ijl (i.e. "calf") with the traditional comparison of a lovely young girl to a young gazelle: the lovely girl, or young gazelle, is an Arab in the same way that the fierce warrior, or Ethiopian lion, is from the tribe of the calf.

⁶³ See Zuhair Ibn Abī Sulmā, *Dīwān*, p. 88. This is the beginning of the fourth verse of the ode. Speaking to himself, Zuhair recommends turning away from the usual introductory material concerning the journey and simply starting to praise Harim Ibn Sinān, a man famous in pre-Islamic times for bringing about a peace treaty between the warring 'Abs and Dhubyān tribes.

⁶⁴ That is, eulogies or representations that move the listeners to fearful or tender affections; see above, paras. 51-52.

few particular characteristics. The poems of these people are excellent when they are *muqatta'āt*, but they are not excellent when they are odes. Some poets are the contrary. They are the makers of odes—like al-Mutanabbī and Ḥabīb.⁶⁵ They are either accustomed to speaking about things that have many particular characteristics, temperamentally disposed to make representations of them, or possessed of both conditions.

76. He said: for some imitations and ideas long meters are suitable, whereas for others short ones are suitable. Sometimes the meter is suitable for the idea but not suitable for the imitation, sometimes it is the reverse, and sometimes it is not suitable for either of them. It is either difficult to find examples of these in the poems of the Arabs or they are not found in them, since their meters⁶⁶ are limited. 1456^a10-15

77. He said: to the things that constitute poems may be added external matters, namely, the attitudes suggested by the poet's voice and manner—as set out above.⁶⁷ These are most frequently found among the poets who employ them for affective poems—as in the ones that speak of people in Hell and yet others. Since of the things constituting poems we have already discussed those that are truly parts of them, we ought to discuss these as well. Thus we say: in general, these actions are the ones referred to by what are called affective statements. Therefore when they are employed, they ought to be employed with these statements. That is because they show the affection whose estab- 1456^a33-1456^b8

⁶⁵ That is, Abū Tammām Ḥabīb Ibn Aws.

⁶⁶ The term is *a'ārīd* and is the plural of *'arūd*; see above, para. 20, note 1. By paying more attention to the basic meaning of *a'ārīd* in the singular, the clause can be translated as “since prosody is of little value to them.” In that case Averroes would have to be understood as arguing that because of the necessity for the poet to adhere strictly to one particular meter in composing an ode, it is difficult to make a poem of great length without falling into very stilted speech.

⁶⁷ See above, para. 21.

lishment is intended by the statement as though it had already taken place and were certain. In the *Rhetoric*, the rhetorical affective statements and the types of affections these statements produce have already been set out for you.⁶⁸ Therefore these actions are more particularly characteristic of the *Rhetoric* than of the *Poetics*. The affections established by the rhetorical or poetical statement are fear, anger, compassion, amplification,⁶⁹ and the rest of the things enumerated in the *Rhetoric*. It is clear that just as there are statements here that inevitably give rise to these affections, so too are there attitudes and outward appearances that indicate that the things inevitably giving rise to these affections are present in the speaker and that, insofar as they have already taken place by dint of the things causing them having taken place, the spectator will be affected by them. These manners and attitudes ought to be employed in poetry—if they are employed—with affective poetic statements for amplification, depreciation, or sorrowful and fearsome things, since these are the things for which the art of eulogy employs affective statements—as stated above.⁷⁰ Now these are employed with affective statements that are not convincing—I mean, those whose imitation is not clear. With affective statements whose imitation is clear and commensurate with the purpose stated in them—namely, true ones—these external matters need not be employed. Indeed, they are looked down upon since they are employed only for statements that are too weak to accomplish what is intended without these

⁶⁸ See Aristotle *Rhetoric* I.ii.5.1356^a13-18 and II.i.8.1378^a20-II.xi.7.1388^b30.

⁶⁹ Though not an affection, amplification is a device used in rhetoric as well as in poetry; see *Rhetoric* II.xviii.4.1391^b31-5.1392^a7 and III.x.7.1411^b6-21. Averroes mentions amplification along with the affections here, not because he means to imply that it is an affection, but because of the intimate connection he notes in the immediate sequel between the affections and amplification as well as depreciation.

⁷⁰ See above, paras. 51-55.

things being joined to them—namely, bad statements. Now the jurist who said to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir before the assembly of the people of Cordobà to stir him up against Ḥasdai the Jew:

Indeed, the one on whose account you were
honed,
this man claims that he is a liar⁷¹

needed nothing more than this statement to arouse al-Nāṣir’s anger against him, even if he had not quit his usual bearing and attitude, because of this statement being true. Therefore, since they are not only superfluous but may lead to the statement and the speaker being looked down upon once he is known for his bearing and dignity, the poet ought not to employ them.

78. He said: with respect to these it may be sufficient 1456^b8-15
for the poet to employ the patterns particularly characteristic of each sort of statement, that is, when he needs to do so with those who employ delivery. By the patterns of speech, I mean the declarative pattern, the interrogative pattern, the imperative pattern, and the supplicative pattern. That is, the pattern for making a declaration is other than the pattern for asking a question, and the pattern for giving a command is other than the pattern for making a request or a supplica-

⁷¹ This verse is not to be found in any collection of poetry. Clearly, the Caliph ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir (300/912-350/961) was honored on account of the Prophet Muhammad, so Ḥasdai is accused of calling the Prophet a liar. The Ḥasdai in question is the famous Ḥasdai Abū Yūsuf Ben Isaac Ben Ezra Ben Shaprut who was born about 915 in Jaén and died about 970 or 990 in Cordobà. Learned in Hebrew, Arabic, and Latin, he studied medicine and was appointed physician to al-Nāṣir. It is claimed that he became the confidant and counselor of the Caliph, in which capacity he served as a special envoy for delicate negotiations with foreign powers. He is also known for his assistance in having Dioscorides’ famous work on botany translated into Arabic. Ḥasdai retained his position and influence under al-Nāṣir’s son al-Ḥakam, known as al-Mustaṣṣir (350/961-366/976).

tion. So the patterns of statements, apart from the rest of the external things, may be sufficient for the poet. For if the latter are such as to cause poetical statements to be looked down upon, they ought not to be set down as part of the art of poetry but ought rather to be set down as part of another art.

CHAPTER SEVEN

79. He said: every poetic discourse may be broken up into seven elements of speech:¹ syllable, conjunction,² disjunction, noun, verb, inflection, and statement. The elements of the syllable are indivisible things—I mean, letters. Not all of them, however, but only those such that from them are composed the simplest syllables that may be pronounced. That is, animal sounds are not divisible into letters, which is why we say that none of their sounds is composed of letters and that no single part of their sounds is a letter. The parts of this sound that is a syllable are the voiced letter and the unvoiced letter. The latter has two divisions. One in no way admits of prolongation—like the *tā'* and the *tā'*³—whereas the other does admit of prolongation—like the *rā'* and the *sīn*⁴—and is called semi-voiced. The voiced is the one created by the striking of the lips, the teeth, or some other part of the throat. It is a compound, inseparable sound—I mean, that it is not possible to separate it in pronunciation from the inaudible letter. These letters—I mean, the voiced ones—are the ones called vowels as well as prolonged and soft letters⁵ among us. The letter that is

1456^b20-33

¹ Literally, “elements of statements” (*uṣṭuqussāt al-aqāwīl*).

² This is the same term (*ribāṭ*) that was translated above as “binding”; see para. 73 and note 60.

³ There are two kinds of T in Arabic. The letter *tā'* is pronounced like the English T, whereas the letter *tā'* is the emphatic form and is pronounced in a fuller and stronger manner and with a rounded mouth. By this division of the unvoiced letter, Averroes means to indicate consonants in general.

⁴ These are equivalent to R and S in English. Averroes uses this division of the unvoiced letter to indicate semi-vowels.

⁵ In Arabic, long vowels are known as prolonged letters (*hurūf al-madd*) and diphthongs as soft letters (*hurūf al-līn*). See Wright, *A Grammar*, vol. 1, pp. 5 and 8-9.

semi-voiced is the one that has a certain prolongation when it is with the striking letter⁶—I mean, the voiced letter—but has no audible sound when it is by itself. The unvoiced letter is the one that, when it is with the voiced letter—I mean, the one created by striking—but not when it is by itself, has an audible sound like the one the voiced letter has—I mean, that it has an audible sound when it is combined with another letter, though being itself unvoiced. Now unvoiced letters have a sound when they are joined to those that have a sound—like AL and AB—and these are known among us as middle or final letters without vowels.⁷ These letters differ in accordance with the different shapes of the mouth, the places where they are joined or separated, their length or shortness, sharpness or sonorousness, and in general all of the extremes in sounds and the means between those extremes that are employed in melodies and meters.

1456^b34-37 80. The syllable is a meaningless sound composed of a voiced letter and an unvoiced one. What he has said about letters is true. That is, when *ḥā'* or *mīm* are taken by themselves, it is not possible to express what they mean or what *fathah* or *ḍammah*⁸ means. Sound is created from both of them being brought together; it exists, however, first because of what *fathah* means and second because of what *fathah* is found in. In general, you ought to know that sound is created from two things. One is that which takes the place of matter, and it is called an unvoiced letter. The second takes the place of form, and it is called a voiced letter. The people of our tongue call the latter vowels as well as prolonged and soft letters.

1456^b38-1457^a6 81. He said: the conjunction is a compound sound

⁶ "Letter" is my addition.

⁷ Literally, "quiescent and amputated letters" (*ḥurūf sākinah wa majzūmah*). The reference is to letters that are made silent in the middle of a word (e.g. *maktab*) or at its end (*lam*) because they have no vowel. See Wright, *A Grammar*, vol. 1, p. 13.

⁸ These are equivalent to H, M, A, and U in English respectively.

that has no meaning when taken by itself, as with the connecting *wāw* and *thumma*.⁹ In general, they are the letters binding one part of the discourse to another—which occurs by their being placed at the beginning of the discourse, as with *ammā*¹⁰—and the letters of condition that signify a connection—as with *idhā* and *matā*.¹¹

82. He said: the disjunction is also a compound 1457^a6-10 sound that has no meaning when taken by itself. In general, these are the letters that separate one statement from another—as with *immā*, *illā*, letters of exception, *bal*, *lākin*,¹² and what is similar to that. They are set down either at the beginning of the statement or at its end. By our statement “sound that has no meaning when taken by itself,” we mean here the simple sounds that have meaning when taken in combination—I mean, when they are combined with something else. And they are letters—I mean, meaningful letters, not letters of the alphabet—because sounds that have meaning when taken by themselves though composed of many sounds—triple, quadruple, or some other type of pattern—are nouns and verbs.¹³

83. A noun is a sound or utterance that taken by itself 1457^a10-13 signifies an idea without reference to time, though none of its parts when taken by itself signifies a part of the idea. This is common to simple and compound

⁹ These are equivalent to “and” and “then” in English; see Wright, *A Grammar*, vol. 1, pp. 290 and 293.

¹⁰ This is a particle used at the beginning of a sentence with the sense of “as for” or the emphatic “now,” the latter being the way I translate *ammā* throughout this commentary.

¹¹ These are equivalent to “if” and “when” in English; see Wright, *A Grammar*, vol. 1, pp. 292 and 294.

¹² These are equivalent to “either,” “unless,” “rather,” and “however” in English respectively. The first two are in fact “letters of exception” or “particles of exception” (*hurūf al-istithnā*), and *ghair ‘an* used in the sense of “but” would be another; see Wright, *A Grammar*, vol. 1, pp. 292-293. Later in this paragraph Averroes tries to account for the restricted sense in which he uses the term *hurūf* here.

¹³ The text has the singular: “noun and verb” (*al-ism wa al-fiʿl*).

nouns. Indeed, names composed of two nouns are not employed as though each one of their parts signified one part of the idea that the combination of the two nouns signifies—as when a man is named ‘Abd al-Malik or ‘Abd al-Qais.¹⁴

1457^a14-18 84. A verb is a sound or utterance that signifies an idea and the time of that idea; and, as is the case with the parts of the noun, none of its parts when taken by itself signifies a part of that idea. That the verb signifies the time of the idea sets it apart from the noun, for neither “man” nor “white” signifies any time, whereas “walked” and “is walking” signify past and present time.

1457^a18-23 85. He said: inflection pertains to the noun, statement, and verb. The inflected noun is the noun in construct—by “in construct,” I mean linked to something, along the same lines as nouns called accusative or genitive in the tongue of the Arabs. The inflected statement is along the same lines as the command and the question. The inflected verb is the one that signifies the past or the future, and it is the uninflected one that signifies the actual and is particularly characteristic of their tongue.¹⁵

1457^a23-29 86. A statement is a meaningful compound utter-

¹⁴ ‘Abd means “servant” and *al-Malik* “the king.” The word *al-Qais* can be the name of an Arabic tribe or can be used to denote the male sexual organ as well as famine. That someone’s name is ‘Abd al-Malik, however, does not necessarily mean that he is a servant, much less a servant of the king. The same holds for the possible meanings of the name ‘Abd al-Qais. For a more detailed explanation, see Averroes’ *Middle Commentary on Aristotle’s De Interpretatione*, para. 4, notes 3-4.

¹⁵ Though Aristotle says nothing here about this question, Averroes may be thinking of a distinction he made in his *Middle Commentary on Aristotle’s De Interpretatione*, para. 11, about there being no clear differentiation in Arabic between the present and future tenses of the verb. As he notes there, the Arab grammarians urged that a *sin* or a *sawfa* be added to the undifferentiated present-future form of the verb to emphasize that the future is intended. Accordingly, his point here is that Arabic has no distinct present tense of the verb as do other languages.

ance every one of whose parts is meaningful when taken by itself. A compound statement is said to be one in two ways. One is when it signifies a single idea—like “this man is an animal.” The second is when it is one because of the things bound up in it, along the same lines as your saying “one ode” and “one oration.”

87. He said: nouns are of two sorts, either simple— 1457^a31-34
namely, what is not composed of nouns that have meaning—or double—namely, what is composed of nouns that have meaning. When the intention is to name a single thing, however, those nouns of which it is composed do not have meaning—like ‘Abd Shams and ‘Abd al-Qais.¹⁶

88. He said: every noun is either authentic, alien to 1457^b1-1458^a7
the tongue, transferred and employed in a rare way, ornamental, coined, intellected,¹⁷ separated,¹⁸ or altered. The authentic noun is the one particularly characteristic of each nation in particular. The alien one is that which belongs to another nation, and the poet inserts it into his poetry—that is like “brocade,” “niche,” and other foreign nouns entering into the tongue of the Arabs.¹⁹ Now the rare, transferred noun is a strange noun that has been transferred from species

¹⁶ See note 14 above. The meaning is the same here. *Shams* means “sun.”

¹⁷ Here and in the rest of the paragraph, Averroes seems to have been misled by the old Arabic translation, which has *ma‘qūl* (intellected) and *mamdūh* (praised) instead of something like *mamdūd* (lengthened) for Aristotle’s *epektetamon*.

¹⁸ Here and in the rest of the paragraph, Averroes seems to have been misled by the old Arabic translation, which has *mufāriq* (separated) instead of something like *maqṣūr* or *muqārib* (curtailed) for Aristotle’s *huphērēmenon*.

¹⁹ The word for “brocade,” *istabraq*, is Persian in origin. According to some commentators on the Quran, the word for “niche,” *mish-kāh*, comes from Ethiopian and signifies a hollow in the wall where a lamp can be placed; see Reinhard Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, p. 780. Note also that in keeping with the translation of *ism dakhīl* as “alien noun,” an argument could be made for translating the clause “foreign nouns entering into” as “foreign nouns alien to” (*al-asmā’ al-‘ajamiyyah al-dakhīlah fī*).

to genus—like calling killing “death”—from genus to species—like calling motion “transference”²⁰—or from one species to another—like calling betrayal “theft.” Or it consists in something related to a second thing being transferred to a third thing that is related to a fourth thing in the same way as the first is related to the second—like some of the ancients used to call old age “the evening of life” and evening “the old age of day,” old age being related to life the same way as evening is to day. The coined, improvised noun is one invented by the poet, he being the first one to employ it. Though not found in the poems of the Arabs, this is found in emerging arts.²¹ Most of what is in the arts is transferred rather than coined and invented. Sometimes the modern poets employ it—I mean, the transferred noun—in a metaphorical manner with respect to the arts, as in the statement of Abū al-Ṭayyib:

If what you have in mind is a present action,
it will be past before you can change its
mood.²²

And sometimes they employ an inflection never before employed, as in his statement:

²⁰ Though both manuscripts have “like calling transference motion” (*mithl tasmiyat al-nuqlah ḥarakah*), this emendation is dictated by Averroes’ own explanation in his *Middle Commentary on Aristotle’s Categories*, para. 108, that motion is a genus having six species of which transference is one.

²¹ That is, words are coined in newly emerging arts to denote specific activities, tools, or materials.

²² See Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān*, vol. 3, p. 382. The poet is speaking to Saif al-Dawlah about a battle, and he wishes to say that the battle in which his prince is now engaged or about to become engaged may be over before he can alter its outcome. In the verse, al-Mutanabbī uses grammatical terms denoting the various tenses of verbs. Thus, what I have translated as “present action” can also be understood as “present tense” (*fi’l muḍāri*). Similarly, what I have translated as “change its mood” means literally “becomes apocopated,” that is, undergoes the change in structure that puts the verb into the jussive mood; the jussive intended here must be that having the meaning of the past tense (see Wright, *A Grammar*, vol. 1, p. 60, and vol. 2, p. 41).

The musky fragrance of the lovely girls and of
the wadi's laurel wafted to and fro.²³

Now the separated and intellected nouns are not found in the tongue of the Arabs. The ornamental ones are nouns some of whose parts have been made into a tune, and it ornaments them. It has been said that he means by separated the nouns altered by something being added to them or taken away from them, by suppression, or by transposition. And it has been said that he really means by that the nouns that are difficult to pronounce. It appears from his discourse that among them it was a noun made up of a limited number of syllables. In my estimation, the intellected noun is what he called the variable noun. It appears from his discourse that it is a noun corrupted by something being taken away from it—like elided nouns among us. Now altered nouns are metaphorical nouns whose metaphorical sense is derived from a likeness—like their calling the star “eagle”—a contrary—like their calling the sun “darkness”—or a consequence—like their calling balsam butter “incense” and rain “heaven.”²⁴

89. He said: the most excellent statement with respect to making something understood is the well-known, commonplace statement that is obscure to no one. These statements are made up of well-known, commonplace nouns and are the ones that he called “authentic” in what preceded and that are called “familiar” and “indigenous.” 1458^a18-20

90. He said: and that is like the poetry of two individuals well known to them. And we ought to investi- 1458^a20-21

²³ See *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 20. The idea is that the two scents became mingled and were then diffused. In an entirely unprecedented move, al-Mutanabbî employs the verb *fah* in the sixth form (*tafâ-wah*). Though he speaks only of “its laurel” (*randuh*) in this verse, the antecedent—wadi—is given in the preceding verse.

²⁴ The idea is that balsam butter gives a nice smell when heated. Thus the first of these two examples is that of cause and effect, whereas the second is the converse.

gate who among the poets of the Arabs is most accomplished in this kind of utterance in his poems.

1458^a21-

1458^b8

91. He said: dignified eulogious statements are the ones made up of commonplace nouns and of the other nouns—I mean, the strange transferred ones, the altered ones, and the nonsensical ones. For when poetry is completely stripped of authentic and familiar utterances it is riddle and nonsensical language. That is why puzzles and riddles are made up of strange nouns—by strange, I mean transferred, metaphorical, ambiguous, and nonsensical. The riddle or puzzle is a statement containing meanings that are either impossible or difficult to connect with one another so as to become congruent with something that exists. Insofar as well-known utterances are used, it is impossible to connect some of the meanings with others; but it is possible insofar as utterances that are not well known are used. Among the poets of the Arabs, that occurs frequently in the poetry of Dhū al-Rummah.²⁵ The virtue of the dignified poetical statement is that it is made up both of familiar nouns and of those other kinds. When the poet wants clarity, he brings forth the familiar nouns; and when he wants amazement and pleasure, he brings forth the other sort of nouns. Therefore someone may be laughed at if he wants clarity but brings forth ambiguous, strange, eloquent, or coined nouns. Similarly, someone may be laughed at if he wants amazement and pleasure but brings forth commonplace nouns. It is as though the poet must not so indulge in his use of unfamiliar nouns that he is on the verge of making a riddle or so indulge in familiar nouns that he moves away from the path of poetry to trivial discourse.

1458^b11-15

92. He said: that utterances correspond to one another in extent and that meanings be both proportion-

²⁵ See, for example, the ode of Dhū al-Rummah called "The Enigma of the Arabs," *Dīwān*, pp. 169-183.

ate to one another and balanced are matters²⁶ that must be prevalent and common in all the utterances that are parts of poetical statement. For instance, we find that even when poets employ authentic utterances in situations where their use of them draws ridicule upon themselves, their poetry is not devoid of these two matters—I mean, balance and correspondence in extent. Indeed, this is prevalent in all kinds of poetry. With poems made up of variable nouns, the existence of this idea is even more evident. The correspondence in extent among the utterances he mentioned is for them to be comparable to one another with respect to the number of letters. If in addition they correspond with respect to all or to some of the utterance, this is what is known among the people of our time as congruity and homogeneity. There are varieties of correspondence. That is, there is correspondence that is in all of the utterance and all of the meaning—this being like the poet's statement:

I do not see that death is overcome by anything
but death²⁷

and like their statement “great in fighting, great in hosting.” Or it is in some of the utterance and some of the meaning, in some of the utterance and all of the meaning, in all of the utterance and some of the meaning, only in all of the utterance, only in some of the utterance, only in all of the meaning, or only in some of the meaning. An example of correspondence in some of the utterance and some of the meaning is the nouns

²⁶ The text has the singular, *amr*, but see the immediate sequel.

²⁷ This verse is found in the *Dīwān* of ‘Adī Ibn Zaid al-‘Ibādī, who died in about 102/721, p. 65, but is also attributed to two other lesser known poets, Suwādah Ibn ‘Adī and Umayyah Ibn Abī al-Ṣalt. The correspondence in the utterance and the meaning come from the repetition of the word death (*al-mawt*), the idea being that death is final. The rest of the line reads:

death spoils the pleasure of rich and poor alike.

derived from a single inflection—and that is like the statement of al-Mutanabbī:

To the extent that people are decisive, decisions
are made;
and generous deeds denote the extent of
their generosity.²⁸

An example of correspondence in some of the utterance and all of the meaning is their statement “a dirham of the prince’s minting and minted by the prince.” An example of the converse of this—I mean, in all of the utterance and some of the meaning—is equivocal nouns, and poets frequently employ them.²⁹ An example of correspondence only in all of the utterance is ambiguous nouns—like the statement of al-Maʿarrī:

Maʿān is a dwelling place belonging to our loved
ones³⁰

²⁸ See Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān*, vol. 3, p. 378.

²⁹ Elsewhere, Averroes identifies the equivocal noun (*ism mushakkak*), as a sort of ambiguous or homonymous noun (*ism mushtarak*). Explaining that ambiguous nouns have more than a single meaning, he notes that whereas the meanings of ambiguous nouns do not necessarily have any relation despite their dissimilarities, those of equivocal nouns do; see “The Discussion of What Utterances Signify,” para. 1, in *Averroes’ Short Commentary on Aristotle’s Organon*. In this context, he mentions the use of *mabdaʿ* (principle) to speak of an animal’s heart, a wall’s foundation, or a path’s extremity and saying “a wine grape” or “wine-colored” as examples of equivocal nouns. See also *Averroes’ Middle Commentary on Aristotle’s Categories*, para. 3.

³⁰ This verse is from the *Siqt al-Zand* (*Spark of the Fire Stick*) of the prolific poet Abū al-ʿAlāʾ Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Maʿarrī (363/973-449/1057); see *Shurūḥ Siqt al-Zand*, vol. 1, p. 172. The term *maʿān* is used twice here, once as the name of a place in Syria and then in its more usual meaning of residence or home. In “The Discussion of What Utterances Signify,” para. 1, Averroes explains that the utterance used to denote the planet Jupiter, *mushtarī*, is ambiguous because it also means “buyer”; similarly, the utterance used to refer to some of the constellations (*kalb*) is ambiguous because it also means the animal that barks, “dog.”

and like his statement:

Your fore-arm is thick, and your upper-arm is
lethal.³¹

And an example of correspondence only in some of
the utterance is Ḥabīb's statement:

When are you going to forget this woman from
the *Dhuhl* tribe?³²

and the statement of Abū al-Ṭayyib:

I let my gaze wander between the mounts and
the grooms.³³

All this exists in the language of the Arabs—like beat-
ing and thick honey, carrying and lamb, the sun

³¹ See *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 1212. The first half of this verse reads:

Your meanings are many, but the expression is one.

Actually, this is not really an example of ambiguous or homonymous nouns that give rise to confusion because they have several meanings but of two distinct nouns that look like ambiguous nouns insofar as they resemble each other. The utterance translated as “thick” is *mughtāl*, a verbal adjective formed from the passive voice of the verb *gh.y.l.* in the eighth form. Likewise, the utterance translated as “lethal” is *mughtāl*, but it is a verbal adjective formed from the passive voice of a different verb—the verb *gh.w.l.*—also in the eighth form. The difference between these two utterances (*mughtāl* and *mughtāl*) is not immediately evident because each of the root verbs has a weak second radical—that is, they are hollow verbs—that is rendered in identical fashion for verbal adjectives in the eighth form. See Wright, *A Grammar*, vol. 1, pp. 81-87 and 143-144, and vol. 2, p. 312. Still, the point is that both utterances lead to the same end: death. Though the meaning of the utterances vary, the sense they give is the same.

³² See Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, vol. 2, p. 322. The correspondence in the utterance comes from the verb “to forget” (*dhahal*) having the same roots as the name of the tribe of the woman in question. The correspondence is only partial because a present participle of the verb (*dhāhīl*) is juxtaposed to an adjective (*dhuhliyyah*).

³³ See Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān*, vol. 3, p. 85. The word “mounts” (*khayl*) has the root *kh.y.l.*, whereas *kh.w.l.* is the root of the word for “grooms” (*khawal*). Thus the correspondence is only partial.

shined and it rose.³⁴ An example of the correspondence only in all the meaning is consignificant nouns³⁵—like in his saying:

it was made desolate and laid waste.³⁶

An example of correspondence³⁷ only in some of the meaning is the variable nouns that denote a single thing in various manners—like “cutting” and “honed steel.”³⁸ Among the Arabs, rhymes are correspondence in extent and in some of the utterance. That is either with respect to a single letter—namely, the final one—or with respect to two letters—namely, what the moderns designate as “imposed necessity.”³⁹

93. Balance in the parts of the statement comes

³⁴ In Arabic, each set of words is basically the same. In the first two pairs, a change from a silent letter to a vowelled letter—*al-ḍarb* and *al-ḍarab*, *al-ḥaml* and *al-ḥamal*—changes the meaning of the word. With the last set, the removal of a vowel or voiced letter changes the verb from the fourth to the first form and thus alters the basic meaning—*ashraqat al-shams* and *sharaqat*. (I take it that Averroes means nothing special by his suppression of the subject *al-shams* with *sharaqat*.)

³⁵ These are nouns that have the same meaning. Though he distinguishes between the consignificant noun (*ism mutarāḍif*) and the synonymous noun (*ism mutawāṭiʿ*) in his “The Discussion of What Utterances Signify,” paras. 2-3, he blurs that distinction in his *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's De Interpretatione*; see para. 57 and note 32.

³⁶ The reference is to ‘Antarah; see *Dīwān*, p. 143. Both “was made desolate” (*aqwā*) and “was laid waste” (*aqfar*) have basically the same meaning, the reference being to a now deserted encampment where the poet once had a loved one; see above, para. 69 and note 50. The complete verse reads:

Hail to a deserted encampment belonging to a time long past;
it was made desolate and laid waste after Umm al-Haitham
went away.

³⁷ Averroes uses the term *al-muttafiqah* here instead of the term *al-muwāfiqah* that he has used hitherto.

³⁸ Each utterance is used to refer to a sword, but in a different manner.

³⁹ This term (*luzūm*) refers to a complicated rhyme-scheme perhaps best illustrated in the famous poems of Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī, *Luzūm mā lā yalzam* or *Luzūmiyyāt*.

about in four ways. One is by bringing forth the thing and its likeness—like the sun and the moon—another⁴⁰ by bringing forth contraries—like night and day—another⁴⁰ by bringing forth the thing and what is used with it—like the bow and arrow or the horse and bridle—and another⁴⁰ by bringing forth commensurate things—like the king and God. This commensurateness is taken from only four things. Under this heading, al-Kumait was decried for his statement:

Coquetry and white teeth are together made
perfect in her⁴¹

because coquetry is not comparable to white teeth. Under this heading some people said that the statement of Imru' al-Qais:

Just as I have not ridden a charger for pleasure,
nor become engrossed in a buxom lass with
ankle bracelets,
I have not bought the quenching wine-skin, nor
said
to my horse "charge again" after it has
reared up⁴²

was not commensurate and that the converse of what he did would be commensurate—I mean, that the beginning of the first verse be the beginning of the second and the beginning of the second the beginning of the first. Something like this was said about the statement of Abū al-Tayyib:

You stayed, and there is no doubt of death for
one who stays,

⁴⁰ My addition, the text reading only "or" (*aw*).

⁴¹ See al-Kumait Ibn Zaid al-Asadī (60/679-126/743), *Shi'r*, vol. 1, p. 93. The image seems to be that a flirtatious girl displays her white teeth as she smiles coquettishly.

⁴² See Imru' al-Qais, *Dīwān*, p. 143. The lines refer to the poet's vow to abstain from pleasures until he avenges the death of his father.

as though you were on the eyelid of
destruction while it slumbered;
The heroes passed you by, wounded and in rout,
while your face remained shining and your
mouth smiling.⁴³

For it to be commensurate, the beginning of the first verse should belong to the second and the beginning of the second belong to the first. Yet what Abū al-Ṭayyib said is somewhat commensurate and so too what Imru' al-Qais said.

1458^b17-19 94. He said: the statement becomes varied—that is, altered from the authentic statement—insofar as the nouns set down in it correspond with respect to balance and extent as well as by means of strange nouns and other kinds of alteration. It may be inferred that the poetical statement is the one that is altered in that when the authentic statement is altered, it is called poetry or a poetical statement and comes to have a poetic function. An example of that is the statement of the one who said:

When we fulfilled every need at Minā,
and those so willing became blessed by
wiping the corners,
We began to converse among ourselves,
as the desert valleys flowed past the necks of
our mounts.⁴⁴

⁴³ See Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān*, vol. 3, pp. 386-387. These verses are part of an ode in praise of Saif al-Dawlah, and the image of the slumbering eyelid of destruction is that destruction feigned sleep thereby sparing him and allowing him to do what he wished in battle.

⁴⁴ The verses are attributed to Kuthayyir Ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Aswad Abū Ṣakhr (died 105/723). Because of his great love for 'Azzah Bint Ḥumail Ibn Ḥaṣṣ al-Kināniyyah, he was known as Kuthayyir 'Azzah; see *Dīwān*, p. 525. They are the first and third lines of a very short poem. Minā is a mountain in the vicinity of Mekkah. Thus the second half of the first verse reads literally, "and those so willing had wiped the corners," the references being to the corners of the sacred Kaaba.

Now it becomes a poem because of his employing the statement:

We began to converse among ourselves,
as the desert valleys flowed past the necks of
our mounts,

instead of saying: we conversed and we departed. Similarly, the poet's statement:

The abyss of the earring is distant⁴⁵

becomes a poem because he employs this statement instead of saying: long-necked. Likewise, the statement of another one:

Oh, abode! Where are your red-lipped gazelles?
In its humanity, there was sociability for
me⁴⁶

becomes a poem because he makes "abode" take the place of a speaking being by addressing it, substitutes "gazelles" for the utterance "women," and brings forth a correspondence between the utterances "humanity" and "sociability."⁴⁷

95. Now if you were to reflect upon the poems that are moving, you would find that they are of this disposition. Anything lacking these alterations has nothing of the idea of poetry about it except meter. Alterations come about through balance, correspondence, substitution, comparison, and in general by expressing the statement in an unc customary fashion. This includes transposition, suppression, adding to, taking

⁴⁵ This is a verse of 'Umar Ibn Abī Rabī'ah al-Makhzūmī al-Qurashī (23/644-93/712); see *Dīwān*, p. 478. Averroes does not actually say "the poet's statement" in introducing this verse, but merely "his statement" (*qawluh*).

⁴⁶ This is a verse of Abū al-'Abbās 'Abdallāh Ibn al-Mu'tazz (247/861-296/908); see *Dīwān*, vol. 2, p. 13.

⁴⁷ In Arabic the correspondence is even more marked, for "humanity" is *ins* and "sociability" *ans*. The term translated here as "speaking being" (*al-nātiq*) could just as readily be translated as "rational being" given the nuances of the root *n.t.q.*

away from, putting before, placing after, and altering the statement from affirmation to negation or from negation to affirmation as well as generally from one opposite to another. It also comes about in general by means of all those kinds of things called figurative expression among us. Suppression is like His statement, may He be exalted, "ask the village"⁴⁸ and His statement "if there were a Quran by means of which the mountains would be moved, the earth parted asunder, and the dead made to speak."⁴⁹ Transposition is like the statement of the one who said: "so and so exists for the sake of his sons, not his sons for his sake" and "the *sunnah* is the reason for man's existence, not man the reason for the *sunnah*'s existence." Putting before and placing after is like His statement, may He be exalted, "and He placed in it no crookedness [but made it] straight"⁵⁰ and His statement "and surely put to the test was Abraham by his Lord."⁵¹ Adding to is like His statement "which brings forth of oil"⁵² and like His statement, may He be exalted, "there is nothing like unto Him,"⁵³ as well as like His statement "nor a flying creature flying by means of its wings."⁵⁴ The speaker saying "no one else but you did it" instead of saying "you did it" exemplifies alteration

⁴⁸ See the Quran 12:82. The idea is "ask the people of the village," but the verse becomes more poignant due to "the people of" being suppressed.

⁴⁹ See the Quran 13:31. The idea is "it would be this Quran." By the conclusion being suppressed, the excessive character of the demands is sharpened.

⁵⁰ See the Quran 18:1-2. The last word "straight" (*qayyim*) would normally go before the clause "and He placed in it no crookedness."

⁵¹ See the Quran 2:124. "Abraham," being the object of the verb, would normally come after "His Lord," which is the subject of the verb.

⁵² See the Quran 23:20. In this clause, "of" (*bi*) is not grammatically necessary.

⁵³ See the Quran 42:11. There is no grammatical necessity for "unto" (*ka*).

⁵⁴ See the Quran 6:38. Given the larger context of this verse, "a flying creature" (*tā'ir*) is superfluous.

from affirmation to negation. Along the same lines is the statement of al-Nābighah:

There is no fault in them except that their
swords
have become notched through beating on
their armored foe.⁵⁵

for he affirms their virtues by denying their faults and singles out something that is not a fault in calling it by the name of its contrary. Alterations can be made pleasing by bringing contraries together in a single thing—as in the poet's statement:

The lawsuit concerns you, and there you are
both litigant and judge⁵⁶

and making one contrary be the reason for another—as in His statement, may He be exalted, “in requital there is life for you.”⁵⁷

96. Neither the simple nor the compound kinds of alterations⁵⁸ contained within these generalizations⁵⁹ are hidden to you. It is likely that it would be very difficult to enumerate their ultimate kinds, and that is

⁵⁵ See al-Nābighah al-Dhubyānī, *Dīwān*, p. 60.

⁵⁶ The verse is from Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī; see *Dīwān*, vol. 3, p. 366. Averroes does not say “as in the poet's statement,” but merely “as in his statement” (*ka-qawlih*); see note 45 above. In this ode, al-Mutanabbī remonstrates with Saif al-Dawlah for engaging a lesser poet to sing his praises. The first half of the verse reads:

O most just of people, except in dealing with me.

Arberry provides a complete translation of this poem in his *Poems of al-Mutanabbī*, pp. 70-74.

⁵⁷ See the Quran 2:179. The idea seems to be that because of the principle of commensurate retaliation or requital set forth in the preceding verse, someone about to kill someone else will think again about the matter and thus preserve both his own life and that of his intended victim.

⁵⁸ I have added “of alterations” for clarity, the text having only “their kinds” (*anwā'uhā*).

⁵⁹ Or perhaps “universals” or even “universal statements,” the term being *kullīyyāt*.

why he limited himself here to generalizations⁵⁹ alone. What remains with respect to these things is that of each of them the one that is more evident, clearer, and more likely be employed. This is only found among the rarest of poets. That is because employing the most evident and most likely of these things is a sign of skill. This sort is the one that brings the function of poetical statements—I mean, moving the soul—together with excellent understanding. For example, when the similarity in the substitution is very strong, it makes both the imitation and the understanding more excellent. Sometimes it happens that among dull-witted listeners a suitable substitution will be barely understood—as happened with His statement, may He be exalted, “until you can distinguish the white thread from the black thread,” which someone presumed to be a real thread, so that “of dawn” was revealed.⁶⁰

1459^a8-14 97. He said: compound nouns lend themselves to the meter in which one lauds outstanding men without singling out any one man. These nouns are seldom found in the tongue of the Arabs and are like their saying “al-‘Abshamī” for a descendant of ‘Abd Shams. Nonsensical nouns lend themselves to the poetry in which the hereafter and the terrors it holds are mentioned, and it was a sort of poetry known to them. Strange, transferred nouns are particularly characteristic of poems that speak about well-known parables, maxims, and stories.

⁶⁰ See the Quran 2:187. In Arabic, the words “of dawn” (*min al-fajr*) appear at the very end of the clause, almost as an afterthought. The idea is that the rays of dawn are like white threads and that day has come when they can be distinguished from the dark threads or rays of night. Averroes seems to be suggesting that the words “of dawn” were revealed in order to make the point of the clause clear to the meanest capacities. And such a clear apprehension is essential, for the verse itself enumerates the kinds of things permitted the faithful during the nights of the fast of the month of Ramadan with the clause in question stipulating that they may “eat and drink until they can distinguish the white thread of dawn from the black thread.”

98. He said: we have now said enough about the art of eulogy and the things like comparison and so forth common to the different⁶¹ sorts of poems. The parts of narrative poems such as the beginning, the middle, and the end follow along the same track as do the parts of the art of eulogy. So, too, with representation, except that in them representation is not about actions but about the time periods in which these actions take place. That is, in these one represents how former conditions were with respect to subsequent conditions and how empires, kingdoms, and ages have been transformed. Representation of this kind of existence seldom occurs in the tongue of the Arabs, even though it occurs frequently in the books of scripture.⁶² He mentioned those among their poets who excelled in this sort of poetry and generally lauded Homer. The best of this type among the Arabs is the statement of al-Aswad Ibn Yu'fur:

1459^a15-1459^b7

What should I hope for after the clan of
 Muḥarriq
 and of Iyād have left their dwelling places,
 The land of al-Khawarnaq castle, of al-Sadīr
 castle, of Bāriq,
 and of the battlemented castle at the Sindād
 River?
 They settled in Anqirah where there flowed to
 them
 the water of the Euphrates, coming from
 high mountains;
 The winds brought down their dwelling places;
 it is as though they had a fixed appointment.
 Thus I see that comfort and everything in which
 one delights
 one day comes to decay and waste.⁶³

⁶¹ My addition.

⁶² Or, "the books of the Divine Law" (*al-kutub al-shar'īyyah*).

⁶³ See al-Aswad Ibn Ya'fur Ibn 'Abd al-Aswad Abū al-Jarrāh, who lived from about 535 to 600; *Dīwān*, pp. 26-28. For the order of

1459^b7-11 99. He said: reversal, discovery, and the combination of these two, which are the parts of the dignified art of eulogy, are also the parts of this kind. Sometimes some of its parts are affective, as is the case with the art of eulogy. And its precepts with respect to melody⁶⁴ and to song are the same as the precepts of the art of eulogy.

1459^b17-1460^a5 100. He mentioned the differences between the art of eulogy and their other poetical arts; the particular characteristics of meters, parts, representation, and length that set those other poems apart; and that there are meters here that are more suitable for some poems than for others. He mentioned those poets who excelled in these things as well as those who did not and lauded Homer in all this. All that is peculiar to them, and no example of it is to be found among us either because what he mentioned is not common to most nations or because with respect to these things something apart from what is natural occurred to the Arabs—and this is more likely. After all, he did not set down in this book of his what is peculiar to them but what is common to natural nations.

1460^a5-12 101. He said: what the poet says in his own name ought to be brief in relation to what he says by way of representation, as Homer used to do. Indeed, he used to make a brief introduction and then move on to what he wanted to represent without ever bringing in anything that was unc customary, for the unc customary is disagreeable.

102. In my estimation, he said that because in their comparisons nations have customs particularly characteristic of them—like the statement of Imru' al-Qais:

the verses as Averroes cites them here, see Ibn Qutaibah, *Kitāb al-Shi'r wa al-Shu'arā'*, p. 44. The places mentioned here are in southern Iraq. At the beginning of the second line, Ibn Qutaibah has "people" (*ahl*) rather than "land" (*ard*).

⁶⁴ Or, more literally, "making melody" (*al-talḥīn*).

It digs up the dirt and scatters it, stirring it up,
as would someone digging a cool kneeling
place for his camels in the mid-day heat.⁶⁵

And that is like their comparing the lizard to the whale because of the mirage found in their country. Of this sort is God's statement, may He be exalted, "the deeds of those who disbelieve are like a mirage on flat plains."⁶⁶

103. He said: when the discourse is drawn out and 1460^b2-5
there is no alteration or representation in it, care ought to be taken to present utterances that have an evident signification—namely, those that signify things in themselves, not contrary or different things. Moreover, they should be combined in accordance with what is well known among them, and they should be easy to pronounce. It is likely that this is the greater part of what the name "eloquence"⁶⁷ expresses in the tongue of the Arabs, except that the statement should be clearly true and well known. Indeed the truth that

⁶⁵ See Imru' al-Qais, *Dīwān*, p. 100. The poet is describing a wild ass and compares its frenzied, aimless digging to the purposeful digging of someone seeking to protect his camels, the camels in question being those that can go without water for five days.

⁶⁶ See the Quran 24:39. The comparison of the lizard (*dabb*) to the whale (*nūn*) escapes me, but two citations occurring in the *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* of al-Jāhiz (150/767-200/868) show that the comparison is frequent. One (vol. 6, p. 57) is from al-Buṭāin:

Each being has the wherewithal to survive,
the lizard just like the whale and man just like the lion.

The second (vol. 6, p. 133 and note 4) is in explanation of the saying "until the lizard and the whale are united" and is taken from the *Thi-mār al-Qulūb*: "About something improbable, the Arabs say 'that will not take place until the lizard enters the water' and with respect to the improbability of two different kinds of things coming together 'until the lizard and the whale are united,' because the lizard neither wants nor comes to water whereas the whale cannot stay away from it and thrives only in it."

⁶⁷ The term is *al-faṣāḥah* and might also mean "elegance," that is, elegance of speech, in this context.

it encompasses makes up for any dearth of eloquence in it or any dearth of alteration and representation.

1460^b22-23, 104. He said: there are six sorts of error that take
1461^b22-23 place in poetry and for which the poet must be re-
buked. One is for him to make a representation by
means of what is not possible, even by means of what
is absurd. As I see it, an example of this is the state-
ment of Ibn al-Mu'tazz describing the waning of the
moon:

Look upon it as a boat of silver
that a cargo of amber has weighted down.⁶⁸

Now this is absurd and is made agreeable only due to the strength of the similarity and his not intending to encourage or forbid by means of it. Instead, representations must be made by means of what exists or is presumed to exist—like representing evil people by devils—or by means of what probably exists, not by means of what is improbable or may just as well exist as not,⁶⁹ for this kind of existence is more suited to rhetoric than to poetry.

1460^b28-32 105. The second type of poetic error is to distort the representation, as happens when a painter puts an extra limb in his painting that does not belong or depicts something where it does not belong—like someone who depicts a four-legged animal as having its hind legs in front and forelegs in back. Examples of this ought to be looked for in the poems of the Arabs. As I see it, the statement of one of the modern Andalusians describing a horse is close to this:

And on its ears it has a third ear
consisting of a strong blue spearhead.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ See Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Dīwān*, vol. 2, p. 116.

⁶⁹ Or, more literally, "whose existence is possible for the most part, not for the least part, nor in an equal degree" (*mumkin al-wujūd fī al-akthar lā fī al-aqall aw 'alā al-tasāwī*).

⁷⁰ The author is unknown, but the image is either the head of the rider's spear or a steel horn placed between the horse's two ears.

106. The third type is to represent rational beings by means of irrational things, for this is also a subject of rebuke. That is because there is seldom any truth and frequently falsehood in such representations, unless the rational being is compared with the irrational being on the basis of an attribute they have in common. Yet custom—like the way the Arabs compare women to gazelles and antelopes—may make this sort of thing entertaining. 1460^b32-1461^a9

107. The fourth type is to compare something with the likeness of its contrary or with its own contrary. That is like the saying of the Arabs “heavy-lidded” with respect to a beautiful woman who is languid in appearance. Close to it is their statement: 1461^a9-16

In their matinal tippling, they became sick from
generosity⁷¹

and the statement of another one:

His shirt rent from him, you imagine him
in the midst of the tents pale from shame.⁷²

Now all these are contraries of beautiful attributes, although custom may make that entertaining.

108. The fifth type is to bring forth nouns that signify two contrary things at the same time—like *ṣarīm* in 1461^a31-1461^b9

⁷¹ The verse is from al-Shamardal Ibn Sharīk al-Yarbūʿī (ca. 40/660-111/729); see *Shuʿarāʾ Umawīyyūn*, vol. 2, p. 552. According to the commentary, the verb *r.w.h.* is to be understood here as “drinking wine in the morning.” The contrary image is that generosity can lead to physical distress. There is also a contrary image in the association of a virtue, generosity, with the immoderate act of drinking wine early in the morning.

⁷² This verse is attributed to Lailā al-Akhyaliyyah Bint ʿAbdallāh Ibn al-Raḥḥāl, who died in 85/704 (see *Dīwān*, p. 110), and to Ḥumaid Ibn Thawr al-Hilālī, who died in about 60/680 (see *Dīwān*, p. 131). The contrary image here comes from imagining that though the person spoken of is either a mighty warrior whose shirt has been ripped in battle or someone so strong that his shirt has been ripped by his resisting another, his sense of shame causes him to change pallor and look sickly.

the tongue of the Arabs, as well as *qur'*, *jalal*, and others that the philologists mentioned.⁷³

1461^b9-15 109. The sixth type is to abandon poetical representation in order to turn to persuasion and to assent producing statements, especially when the statement is faulty and barely persuasive. That is like the statement of Imru' al-Qais in defense of his cowardice:

My horses were not cowardly, but they recalled
the garrisons in Barba'īs and Maisar.⁷⁴

This sort may be very fine when it is highly persuasive or when it is true—like the statement of another one in defense of his running away:

God knows I did not cease battling with them
until they raised on my horse blood-red
foam;
And I knew that if I were to fight all alone,
I would be killed without my death hurting
my enemy.
So I turned away from them while my loved ones
were among them
aching to punish them on a day of
ambush.⁷⁵

Now this statement is on the whole quite fine because of its truthfulness, for the alteration in it is slight. That

⁷³ *Ṣarīm* means both very dark night and dawn; *qur'* signifies the menstrual period and the time immediately following when a woman has become purified; and *jalal* denotes a weighty matter as well as one that is of little importance.

⁷⁴ See Imru' al-Qais, *Dīwān*, p. 75. Barba'īs and Maisar are the names of places in Syria where important battles had been fought. The suggestion is that his horses turned away from this battle, which was taking place in Yemen, in order to turn toward the more important earlier battles.

⁷⁵ The verses are from al-Hārith Ibn Hishām al-Makhzūmī, who died in 18/639; they are cited by Ḥassān Ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī (ca. 563-40/661), *Dīwān*, pp. 295-296. They may also be found in the *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Ḥamāsah li Abī 'Alī Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥasan al-Marzūqī*, vol. 1, pp. 188-190.

is why a speaker said: "Oh you Arabs, you make everything look good—even running away."⁷⁶

110. He said: if there are six types of error and the types of rebuke are their opposites, then there must be twelve kinds of essential error and particularly characteristic rebuke—six errors and six rebukes. Examples of the rebukes are not found among us, since these things were not marked out by our poets nor did they know about them. 1461^b22-25

111. This is the sum of what has penetrated to our understanding with respect to what Aristotle has mentioned in this book of his about the statements common to all sorts of poetry and about those particularly characteristic of eulogy—I mean, those that are also common to all or to most nations.⁷⁷ The rest of what he mentioned in his book about the subdivisions among them within the other sorts of poetry and within that of eulogy is peculiar to them. Moreover, we find that only some of that is mentioned in this book that has reached us. That indicates that this book was not completely translated and that there are still many other sorts of subdivisions of their poems that remain to be discussed. And in the introduction to his book he had promised to speak about all these things. With respect to the common statements, the discussion of the art of satire is missing.⁷⁸ It is likely, however, that one can come close to grasping this by means of the things said under the heading of eulogy, since contraries can be known from one another.

112. When you have grasped what we have written

⁷⁶ This statement is attributed to Rutbil; see al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī Yaḥyā Ibn 'Alī, *Sharḥ al-Ḥamāsah li al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī*, vol. 1, p. 98.

⁷⁷ "Nations" is my addition.

⁷⁸ At the beginning of chapter 6 of the *Poetics* (1449^b21-22), Aristotle promises to discuss comedy (what Averroes understands as satire, see above para. 3, note 4) later. It is now generally assumed that this discussion occurs in the lost second book of the *Poetics*. Apparently, that part of the treatise was missing even in the middle of the tenth century when the Arabic translation was completed.

here, you will discover—as Abū Naṣr [al-Fārābī] said—that in comparison with what is in this book of Aristotle and in the *Rhetoric* what the people of our tongue know about poetical rules is a mere trifle.⁷⁹ Neither how the latter rules go back to the former nor what is correct and what incorrect in what they mention about these things is obscure to you. Through His grace and His compassion, God leads to what is correct.

113. The Middle Commentary is finished.

⁷⁹ See Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Risālah fī Qawānīn Ṣinā'at al-Shu'arā'*, 152:8-14.

ARABIC-ENGLISH GLOSSARY

akhdh bi-al-wujūh delivery (Greek: hupokrisis), also elocution

amr matter (Greek: pragma)

bayyin, bayyin bi-nafsih evident, self-evident

iḥtijāj argumentation, giving argument for

ḥadd definition (Greek: horismos), also term (Greek: horos)

ḥarf particle

muḥākāh representation

ḥall loosing (Greek: lysis)

khurāfah myth (Greek: muthos)

khāṣṣah particular characteristic

takhyīl imitation (Greek: mimēsis)

istidlāl discovery (Greek: anagnōrisis)

idārah reversal (Greek: peripeteia)

ribāṭ binding (Greek: desis), also conjunction (Greek: sundesmos)

ramz riddle (Greek: ainigma)

ism noun (Greek: onoma)

muṭtadhal commonplace

basīṭ simple

mutabāyin distinct

ḥaqīqī authentic (Greek: kurion)

makhfūḍ genitive

mukhtalif variable

dakhīl alien (Greek: glōtta)

murtajal improvised

murakḥkham elided

mutarādif consignificant

murakkab combined, compound

muzayyan ornamental (Greek: kosmos)

mushtarak, see also muttafaq homonymous

- mushtaqq derived
 mushakkak equivocal
 muṣarraf inflected
 muḍāʿif double
 ʿafif dignified (Greek: semnos)
 maʾmūl coined (Greek: pepoiēmenon)
 mustaʿār metaphorical
 mughayyar altered
 mutaghayyar changeable
 alsan eloquent
 laghawī nonsensical
 manṣūb accusative
 manqūl transferred
 ahli indigenous
 mutawāṭiʾī synonymous
 mutafaqq homonymous
 mustawli familiar
 tashbih comparison
 shakl pattern
 ishārah illustration
 taṣrīf inflection (Greek: ptōsis)
 ṣawt sound (Greek: phōnē)
 zāhir clear
 taʿazzal to extol
 taʿzīm amplification
 ʿādah character
 istiʿārah metaphor (Greek: metaphora)
 fāṣilah disjunction (Greek: arthon)
 fiʿl, see also kalimah verb (Greek: rēma)
 qiṣṣah story
 qaṣīdah ode
 maqṭaʿ syllable (Greek: sullabē)
 qawl statement (Greek: logos), also sentence, argument
 kalimah verb (Greek: rēma)
 kināyah metonymy (Greek: metonumia)
 laḥn melody (Greek: harmonia, melos)
 lughz puzzle
 lafz utterance (Greek: phōnē)
 mathal likeness, also simile

maḍīḥ eulogy, also tragedy (Greek: tragōidia)

naghm tune

hiǰāʾ satire, also comedy (Greek: kōmōidia)

wazn meter (Greek: metron), also rhythm (Greek: rithmos)

ENGLISH-ARABIC GLOSSARY

- amplification ta'zīm
argumentation, giving argument for ihtijāj
binding, see also conjunction ribāṭ (Greek: desis)
clear zāhir
character 'adah (Greek: ethos)
comedy, see also satire hijā' (Greek: kōmōidia)
comparison tashbīh
conjunction ribāṭ (Greek: sundesmos)
definition, see also term ḥadd (Greek: horismos)
delivery, elocution akhdh bi-al-wujūh (Greek: hupokrisis)
discovery istidlāl (Greek: anagnōrisis)
disjunction fāṣilah (Greek: arthon)
eulogy, see also tragedy madīh
evident bayyin
self-evident bayyin bi-nafsih
extol ta'azzal
illustration ishārah
imitation takhyīl (Greek: mimēsis)
inflection taṣrīf (Greek: ptōsis)
likeness, simile mathal
loosing ḥall (Greek: lysis)
matter amr (Greek: pragma)
melody laḥn (Greek: harmonia, melos)
metaphor isti'ārah (Greek: metaphora)
meter, see also rhythm wazn (Greek: metron)
metonymy kināyah (Greek: metonymia)
myth khurāfah (Greek: muthos)
noun ism (Greek: onoma)
accusative maṣṣūb
alien dakhīl (Greek: glōtta)
altered mughayyar
authentic ḥaqīqī (Greek: kurion)

- changeable mutaghayyar
 coined ma'mūl (Greek: pepoiēmenon)
 combined, also compound murakkab
 commonplace mubtadhal
 consiḡnificant mutarādif
 derived mushtaqq
 dignified ʿafif (Greek: semnos)
 distinct mutabāyin
 double muḡāʿif
 elided murakhkham
 eloquent alsan
 equivocal mushakkah
 familiar mustawli
 genitive makhfūd
 homonymous mushtarak, also muttafaq
 improvised murtajal
 indigenous ahli
 inflected muṣarraf
 metaphorical mustaʿār
 nonsensical laghawī
 ornamental muzayyan (Greek: kosmos)
 simple basīt
 synonymous mutawāṭiʿi
 transferred manqūl
 variable mukhtalif
 ode qaṣīdah
 particle ḡarf
 particular characteristic khāṣṣah
 pattern shakl
 puzzle lughz
 representation muḡākāh
 reversal idārah (Greek: peripeteia)
 rhythm wazn (Greek: ruthmos)
 riddle ramz (Greek: ainigma)
 satire hijāʿ
 sound ṣawt (Greek: phōnē)
 statement, also argument, sentence qawl (Greek: logos)
 story qiṣṣah
 syllable maqṭaʿ (Greek: sullabē)

term ḥadd (Greek: horos)
tragedy madīḥ (Greek: tragōidia)
tune naghm
utterance lafẓ
verb kalimah, also fiʿl

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Aristotle's *Poetics* has held the attention of scholars and authors through the ages, and Averroes has long been known as "the commentator" on Aristotle. His *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's Poetics* is important because of its striking content. Here, an author steeped in Aristotle's thought and highly familiar with an entirely different poetical tradition shows in careful detail what is commendable about Greek poetics and commendable as well as blameworthy about Arabic poetics.

Heretofore, non-Arabic readers have had to depend upon Hermannus Alemannus's Latin translation of Averroes's *Middle Commentary* or on its English version. Both are inadequate. They incorrectly render Averroes's various arguments and make his beautiful poetic citations read like doggerel. Moreover, they provide inaccurate and incomplete information about the sources of those citations and consequently portray Averroes's text as a curious compilation of relics from some exotic but not very learned horde.

The present translation is based on a sound, critical Arabic edition prepared by the translator. Not only is it the first English translation from the Arabic original, but also the first translation of the Arabic text into any language other than medieval Hebrew or Latin. The translation is literal and eloquent, albeit more literal when eloquent when sense demands such a sacrifice. Throughout the commentary, the same English word is used for the same Arabic word unless an exception is noted. The renditions of the poetic citations are somewhat freer without reaching to unwarranted innovations.

Questions leading to a more accurate grasp of Averroes's argument are explored in the introduction, and the basic themes of his interpretation of Aristotle are laid bare. Thus, Butterworth takes issue with many of the prevalent beliefs about medieval Arabic poetics and explores the philosophical contention that poetry belongs to the art of logic. In doing so, he also points to the way that position allows both Averroes and Aristotle to revise Plato's attack on poetry and the significance of their revision.

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ISBN 1-890318-03-5

9 781890 318031

ST. AUGUSTINE'S PRESS
South Bend, Indiana